A Practical Discourse
CONCERNING GODS DECREES.

In Two parts.
The First concerning mans unfitness to dispute against the Decrees of God: out of Rom. 9. 20.

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TO THE
HONORABLE
MY
Lord BRADSHAW
Lord Chiefe Justice of Chester.

My Noble Lord,

Late Author in his severall Treatises wherein he endeavours to defend (I will not say the Arminian Tenets, because he is unwilling to have them so stiled, but, which is all one) Free-will and Conditionall election, whether because he was touched with compunction for his former errors, as he thinks them; or else to make his present opinions more taking and plausible (as if he had not fell into them by chance, but got them after much and serious study) I find that he frequently doth usher them in, by professing that he was once a Calvinist (for that it seems...
The Epistle

feemes must be the Name of Obloquie to those, who, according to Scripture (of which Calvin was the best Interpreter, that God hath yet vouchsafed his Church) do maintaine Absolute Predestination but he was frighted into his wits (for so he is pleased to play upon himselfe) by considering the Horrible consequences of Absolute Reprobation.

Were I willing to make my selfe worke in this time of my retirement here, by engaging with a Person, who is, as some thinke very able, I am sure very confident, and very Angry; I would not desire greater advantage then these few words of his might give me: for to be an Arminian, I meane an Asserter of Universall Redemption, and of those other Tenets which lead to it or flow from it, a very little paines will serve the turne; and every man is so Naturally apt to make himselfe a sharer with God, and to cozen himselfe with hopes of mercy, that it is a much harder matter to escape those opinions, then to attaine them. Besides for any to be deferred from the maintenance of any truth in These, because it feemes attended with unanswerable difficulties, and many ill consequences, is to my thinking very unreasonable: since if that may be admitted, all the mysterious part of our Religion which contains the Credenda must never expect either to be entertained or defended. I might adde farther, that for any to be frighted into his wits, is a thing altogether unusuall: and if it hath indeed, in this matter so fared with that Gentleman
Dedication.

Dedicated, he is the first who can boast of the Experiment.

But, my Lord, I am not desirous to dispute at all in these matters, much less with one, who is so taken up with abusing persons of greater worth, that he cannot find leisure to take notice of one so Inconsiderable as my selfe: onely entending to handle some part of that question which is now in contest, I must crave leave to profess, that I never yet was satisfied, but that those fatal consequences, whatever they are, which are thought to attend *Absolute Reprobation*, they do as farre as I can see equally Accompany God's *Prescience*, of which yet this Gentleman is a zealous assertor. For if God foresees who will refuse the meanes of *Grace*, he foresees likewise that he will assist one and not another: and that without such particular Divine assistance, it is impossible any should believe and be saved. Now what is this else, but for men at long runne, after much time mispent in wrangling, to have recourse unto God's *Absolute* but yet discriminating *Will* and *Power*, which at their first setting out they were desirous to decline.

As for those Tragicall stories and dreadfull Nothings, wherewith that Gentleman's writings, and before him *Acta Synodalيا* are stuffed, concerning God's *cruelty, Tyranny* and I know not what else— As also the vaine and impertinent declaiming from the common places of God's *Justice*, and *mercy*, thereby to enervate or at least to Enveigh against God's
Gods Absolutes, Irresistable, and Unaccountable Sovereignty. All this terrible talk is nothing but Noise and Flourish, fit indeed to amuse a country Audience, or to impose upon a lazy and superficial reader; but certainly of very little weight with them, who dare not be frightened from, nor talked out of their faith, and who think Scripture truths are to be embraced and followed, in spite of all mens corrupt and empty reasonings against them.

Out of the Scriptures therefore I have undertaken briefly to demonstrate these two things,

First, That whatever opinion is manifestly revealed in Scripture, (such as I take Absolute Reprobation to be) to argue against it, and by Artifices of Humane Wit, and Eloquence to seek to overthrow and disgrace it, this is nothing else but to dispute against God, and impiously to be wise above what is written.

Secondly, That God hath from all Eternity designed a particular Number unto Eternall life, and that this Election is Absolute. From whence it follows, that all those who are not by God in that Act of Absolute Election appointed to life, they are reprobated, i.e. Designed for destruction; which Decree is Absolute, made by Soveraigne Will; but Executed in justice.

And this my Lord, is the summe of the Enfuing Treatises, for the publishing of which, next to the care, every Christian should have to see the Truths of God, so farre as they are revealed to him asserted
ted and freed from cavill, especially in a contradicting, and every way too quarrelsome Age; I have no one outward motive more prevailing with me, then my, perhaps too great, Ambition of presenting something to your Lordship, whereby I might testify to the World, not only that real esteem I have of your Lordship's singular worth and eminence in general, but likewise to manifest in particular how mindful I am of those many signal and Unparallel'd markes of Favour, which You have been pleased to conferre upon my selfe; for which, though the service of my whole life will be too poore and mean a sacrifice, and no endeavours can amount to deserve the name of requital, yet I could not but thinke it my duty to study an acknowledgment which Zeale of mine, if your Lordship pleases either to accept or pardon, I have attained my end; For I aime at nothing more then the Honour of being owned for

My Noble Lord

Your Lordship's most Obliged, most thankfull, and most Humble devoted Servant

EDV. BAGSHAWE.

Ch.Ch.
Decemb. 20.
Romans 9. 20.

Nay but 0 man who art thou that repliest against God.

He Apostle in this Chapter handling that great question, why the Jews, who were, by the Apostles own confession, heires and Children of the Promises, should now be omitted and cast off, and the Gentiles, that before were Aliens, should now be admitted and taken into the Covenant of Grace in Christ; he fixeth it upon God's Election: who being a most free Agent chooseth one and refuseth another, according to His good pleasure, and not out of any foresight of their Workes, whether good or bad: for Jacob was loved and Esau hated, even before they had done either good or Evill—vers. 11.

This Doctrine so much detracting from the merit, and thereby abasing the pride of man, the Apostle foresaw would not be easily digested, and therefore he Repeats and Answers the most obvious of those objections, which were likely upon a rationall account to be made against it; and which in short doe containe the summe of what- ever can be urged in this point.

The first Objection is couched vers. 14. What shall we say then is there unrighteousnesse with God—?
As if the Apostle had said.—You may object: if it be so, that the reason why one man believes, and another doth not; and consequently that one man shall be saved and another damned, be only from God's Election, and not from their merit, doth not this argue some unrighteousness in God? a kind of injustice, or respect of Persons, thus to preferre one man before another? For as all men are equall by nature, so it seemes to be most just and reasonable, that they should be equall in condition too; & not this vast difference, as to their small estate, to be put between the, without any desert or merit of the parties.

To the Objection thus framed, the Apostle returns a double Answer.

1. In a phrase of abhorrence—Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid, let not such a thought enter into our hearts; for whatever the issue of Gods dealings may be, yet, as to the cause of the, this foundation standeth sure, that God is righteous in all his doings, and will be justified when he is judged.

2. By instancing in the example of Pharaoh, whom, God faith, he raised for this very purpose, to manifest His Glory; from whence the Apostle concludes—v. 18. That, God hath mercy, on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will be hardeneth—i. that we are not to looke for any outward cause of Gods actings, for he is not tied to mans endeavour, since all our good is from him, and therefore can merit nothing at his hands: He ordaines happiness, and bestowes holinesse on whom he pleases; they are both free-gifts, we cannot naturally deserve the one, nor are we willing to desire the other—God therefore hardens—i. He lets the sinner be a sinner still, he doth not remove the stone, but lets men persist and goe on in their natural hardness; for he is not obliged to his creature, but acts all things, both in mercy or otherwise, according to the Dictates of his Absolute, Soveraigne and Unaccountable Will.

This Answer being so strict and severe, as leaving the
against the Decrees of God.

greatest part of mankind in an hopelesse and irrecoverable condition, it is objected again. v. 19-Thou wilt then say unto me, why doth he yet find fault, for who hath resisted his will? I. If it be so, that it is not in him that wills, nor in him that runs, but only in God that shows mercy: if by any action of ours, barely as such, we can neither merit Heaven, nor escape Hell; if our wills are tied up so close to the will of God, that like lesser wheeles they move onely as that great mover doth guide them?—then, why is God so Angry with sin and sinners? Why doth he forbid, dehort, and threaten by his Prophets! To what end serve all those examples of vengeance, which we tremble to read of? For if it be so with us, we may be miserable, but we cannot be sinfull; if our spirits be put into an unsuitable frame, so as that we walk contrary to God, it is our sad necessity and not our fault; since none can alter, much lesse resist the will of God, which alone hath made us so.

And now the Objection being pressed to such a degree of impiety, that it doth tacitely lay the guilt of all mens Transgressions upon God, the Apostle thinkes it high time to cut off all farther Arguing, which he doth in these words—Nay, but what art thou, O man, who repliest against God? As if he had said—Doest thou know who thou art, thou bold inquisitive creature, or who it is thou deallest with? Consider that thou art but a man, and wilt thou question thy Maker’s Justice? Forbeare vaine presumptuous man, stand off, and lay thy hand upon thy mouth, for God is in the Bush, God is at the bottom of this dispute, and therefore admire with reverence, what thou canst not comprehend with reason.

So that the words are a short, but yet sharpe, confutation of all carnall reasonings in the matters of God: such Debates are evinced not onely to be sinfull, but likewise unreasonable, by a threefold Argument lying in these words.

B 2 1. The
1. The first is taken from the meanness and contemptible-ness of the person disputing; and that is man: The Apostle brings him in with a *Quis Tu! What art Thou!* as if he was of so slight a make and value, that he fell under no definition. *What art thou O man!*

2. From the Greatness and Incomprehensible Excellence of the Person disputed against, and that is God—a name able to strike dumb and confound the most exalted reason. *What art thou O man who disputes against God?*

3. From the Absurd, Saucy and Malapert manner of carrying on the Dispute; it is not modestly making an Objection, or proposing a doubt and so away, but a resolved persisting in the Cavill; a kind of challenging God to vy Arguments with him. The word is—*Aντιμήσιον—To answer again and again, never to give over, to chop Logick with God, to seek to nonplus him, and to drive his Almighty Power and Wisdom to an absurdity.

So that here is man, vaine man, not disputing but Cavilling and that not with his fellow-creature but with God—put all this together—Empty, Ignorant, Wretched Man, contesting with a Perfect, Wise and Allmighty God; and that in such a way too, as if Man were the better, & the wiser of the two. Strange folly, madness & impudence, this! & yet whoever gives his reason the reines, & will resolve to dispute when he should obey, must needs be guilty of it.

The words thus explained and divided may be summed up in this one Proposition—or Doctrine—viz.

*Man, in whatever Capacity considered, is not a Competent Judge of the Equity and Justice of the proceedings, waies and Counsells of God, in the disposing and Ordering of his Creatures.*

This may be demonstrated two waies

1. First, from the quality and nature of the Person judging, and that is Man.

2. Secondly, from the quality and nature of the things
to be judged. The Wayes and Counfells of God.

In the First I shall prove that man is not fit to judge.

In the Second I shall prove that the Counfells of God, neither do nor can fall under mans judgement.

For the First, viz. That Man is not fit to judge, it will be cleare, if we consider that there are Two things, especially requisite to qualify a man to be a Judge.

1. Ability or Skill.

2. Authority or Power. And Man wants both in this Case.

1. First, Man wants Ability or Skill. Vaine man, faith Job, would be wise, though be be borne like the wildaffe Col. -- i.e. Man would still reteine his Ambitious Humour of pretending to know Good and Evil; he would still exalt himfelfe, and be like God; although that very Desire has made him become, like the Beasts which perish, Rash, Heady, and Impertinent. For since our Fall, Pride has taken up the Place of Reason; and Arrogance fills that Roome, which Knowledge possessed before. As in a veffell, when Water, or the more solid body goes out, presently Aire comes in.

To take a Briefe Survey of mans Weakneffe and Inability, we will consider him

1. In Himfelfe.

2. As compared to God.

1. First, Consider Man in himfelfe, and then I may ask the Question, which our Apostle doth here, What art then O Man? Declare us thy Original, discover thy Excellence, where lies thy Worth? whence comes thy Preeminence? Survey thy Out-fide, and tell me what feest thou? a rotten perishing Carcasse! As our Saviour said of the Tombes, how glorious soever they seemed, yet they were but Tombes, i.e. Charnell-houses, Faire without, but Rotten within. So the most Beautifull and Specious
Man's Unfitness to Dispute

out-side, Deck it, Disguise, Trimme and Adorne it how you will, yet it is still but Dust; you may change and vary its shape, you cannot change and alter its substance. Dust thou art, said God to Adam, and to dust shalt thou returne. Was not this a sad story for Adam to heare, when he thought of nothing else, but of being, as the Divell had promised him, like unto God knowing good and evil: God doth presently undeceive him, by minding him of his Original, and telling him what would be the Exit of all his Borrowed Glory. This no doubt did lift his Thoughts, and lay low those Proud Imaginations, which otherwise might have ceazed him; since a Casket of some value, can scarce be conceiv'd to containe in it a Jewell of any Excellent Price.

I will not, saies God, always strive with man, for that he also is flesh: which may be interpreted, for that he is of the same weak, Fraile, and Infirme Nature with other Creatures. Wherein God seemes to make it as an Argument of his Bearing with man, because Man was Flesh, i.e. unable to beare what God was able to lay upon him. But if God drawes an Argument of Compassion from Mans Frailty, ought not we from thence likewise to draw an Argument of Submission? If God is pleased to forbear punishing and striving with us, because we are but Flesh, ought not we for the same Reason much more to forbear judging of, and contending with him? This use did Abraham make of it. Behold, saith he, I have now taken upon me to speake unto the Lord, who am but Dust and Ashes: Abraham lookes upon it as a Boldnesse, for which he seems to aske Pardon, that he undertook so much as to speak to God, since he was but Dust and Ashes; how much lesse do we thinke for the same reason would he have offered to have disputed with him? But

Secondly, look into man a little nearer, and search his Inward and Hidden worth: what is that Principle which men
men ordinarily do so much boast of and magnify? They call it Reason! and pray what is Reason? Is it not that Carnall or Animall man, which cannot conceive the things of God, and looks upon all the Afflings of the Holy Spirit as Folly! Certainly a small wind will fill our Sails, if such a Principle of knowledge as this can puffe us up: little cause have we to boast of that, which cost us so deare, and is so little worth: for as to get Reason, we lost Paradise; so till we renounce our Reasons, we can never recover it.

But take Reason at its best and highest Elevation, Solomon says it is the Candle of the Lord: and shall the Candle say to the Sun, thou hast no Light in thee? Shall our Faint, Glimmering, and Derivative Lustre, preferre or oppose it selfe to the Fountaine, from which it issued? There is a Spirit in man, faith Job, but the Inspiration of the Almighty giveth understanding: and do we think he gave it for these purposes, to argue and dispute his doings? So much to abuse and misimploy our Talent, is certainly a greater sin, and will bring down a greater Punishment, then barely not to use it.

In short, mans Reason at its best and utmost extent, is a Narrow, Shrunke, and Limited thing, in Spirituall things altogether blind and perverse: in Naturall things either Ignorant, or onely changing Ignorance into Uncertainty: and shall a man so much stretch this Principle, as by it to condemne his Maker? Shall we with this scantling measure Infinity? or set our selves Judges in the highest administrations of Providence, who cannot demonstratively prove the Motion of the smallest Atome? what is this but to darken Counsel by words without knowledge, Job 38.2. to put a False Comment upon a Cleare Text, and to blurre the beauty of Providence with our Perverse and shortsighted Interpretations.

Secondly, Mans Inability doth yet farther appeare, if you.
you consider him as compared to God. It is not for nothing here that the Apostle doth put this Question, *Who art thou, O Man, that replyest against God?* but he does it, thereby to aggravate the Sinfull Presumption of the Disputer; it was against God, therefore the more heinous. And indeed a man can never know his owne Weaknesse and Imperfection aright, till he has lost himselfe in contemplating the Vast Abyss and Ocean of Gods Perfection: as if we would exactly know whether a thing be little or not, we do not use to set it by something that is lesse, but to compare it unto something Greater, as a Sparke to the Flame, a Drop to the Ocean, and the like. So in this case, while a man Centers in himselfe, and draws all his Lines inward; he may perhaps please himselfe with some thoughts of Selfe-Sufficiency; but when he once goes out of himselfe, and takes a strict view of the Amazing Greatnesse and Majesty, which God discovers even in his works of Providence, then doth a man presently begin to perceive his own Emptiness. For suppose a man were kept up close imprisoned in a Dungeon all his dayes, and if after some time of Durance there in that Horror and Darkenesse, he should by chance have a little Glimpfe of light let in to him at a small Cranny, how infinitely would he be delighted and pleased with it; but if afterwards he were taken from thence, and by degrees fitted to endure, and then placed in full Sun-shine, how strangely would he loath his former place of Restraint and Bondage? It is just so with a man, who by degrees is taken off from himselfe, and prepared to a gracious Discovery of Gods excellency. *When I consider, faith the Psalmist, the Heavens, which are the works of thy hand---it followes presently, what is man that thou art mindful of him, or the Son of Man that thou considrest him? Look upon God in the Glory and Brightnesse of his Appearance, and then all Conceits of Humane Excellence*
lence will presently vanish, as Starres do disappeare at Noon-day.

Certaine it is, that if men were more frequent and serious in the contemplating of Gods Power and Wisedome, they would not be so taken up with thoughts of their own, a want of comparing our own emptinesse to Gods fullnesse, is the only thing that doth most pffe us up and swell us. A pregnant Instance of this may be seen in the Case of Job; he finding himselfe under a great Pressure, and feeling, as he thought, hard measure from God, grows Impatient, and seems to long for nothing more, then that he might dispute with God, thinking no doubt but he had so much to say in his own behalfe, as would pffe even God himselfe to answer. Hence are those Passionate Expressions, --Oh that a man might plead with God, as a man pleades for his Neighbour, and Oh! that I knew where I might find him, that I might come even to his Seat! I would order my Cause before him, and fill my mouth with Arguments. i. e. I would Dispute and Argue the Case with him: his Friends dissuade him from this Attempt all they can, they tell him over and over, that he forgets himselfe in turning his Spirit against God, and in letting such words goe out of his mouth. And when that would not take him off, Elihu undertakes to answer in Gods behalfe, and urgeth against him, that God is greater than Man, and gives no account of his Matters. That his Counsells are Inscrutable, for touching the Almighty who can know him, or search him out unto Perfection. With many other arguments to the same purpose, yet still Job remains unsatisfied, and nothing but disputing with God himselfe will content him. Well! at last God doth condiscend to answer his Curiosity: and what is the issue? when once God doth mind him of his Power, that all we see or feele is only an Effect and Product of his Goodnesse: when even the most common and ordinary Phenomena of Na...
Man's Unfitness to Dispute

20. Secondly, as man wants Ability, so likewise he wants Authority, which is the Especiall Requisite to constitute a Judge. When one came to our Saviour to ask his Resolution in a case of a Civil concernment; our Saviour, though he had all power in him, yet acting as Man, refused to meddle, and asks him, *Who made me a Judge?* So I ask thee, thou Bold Disputer, whoever thou art, who made thee a Judge? and by what Authority dost thou argue these things? if thou haft no Warrant, nothing in the Word of God to shew to justify thy Confidence, thou art not only a Rash and Ignorant Censurer, but an Impudent Intruder. I find in Scripture murmuring reproved, Disputing forbidden, and nothing but Obedience required. Wilt thou then upon no better a Ground, then because thou art unsatisfied with the Justice or Reasonableness of such and such a Proceeding, take upon thee to found the Depths of God, and to call him to thy Tribunall? what? shall the Judge of all the Earth be now arraigned at thy Barre, and give thee Account of his Matters? or else thou wilt charge upon him Folly, Injustice or Cruelty, with other things, which I Tremble to Think of. *Quo jurat!* how comes this about, let us know when God parted with his Prerogative, and made you his Overseer?

The Apostle James commanding those to whom he writes, *not to speak evil one of another,* he gives this Reason for it, *because thereby they should judge the Law,* which forbids all Uncharitable Backbitings. *But,* faith he, *if thou...*
Judge the Law, thou art no longer a Doer of the Law, but a Judge, i.e. Thou art a Thing which God never intended thee; he gives his Law to be a Rule of thy Obedience, and not a Subject of thy Reasoning. So say I here, if any takes upon him to Judge Gods proceedings, i.e. if thou weighest his ways in thy Ballance, if thou measurest him by thy Line, if thou dost not Limit & circumscribe him by thy Compasse, and so proceedest to passe Sentence upon him; in this case thou art no longer a Servant of the Lords, but a Judge: and then thou mayest expect and fear what will follow, for if so many perished at one time barely for looking into the Arke; and if he that judges another, though his fellow-creature, is threatened to be judged, how much sorer Punishment, how much sorer Judgment shall he expect, who thus provokes the Lord by Judging, Censuring, and even Condemning him?

So much for the first Reason: that Man is not fit to Judge.

The second Reason is taken from the Nature and Quality of the things Judged, they are the Wayes, Counsells, and proceedings of God, and so cannot fall under Mans Judgment. Thus the Apostle doth argue a pari: As no man can know the things of man, but the Spirit of man that is in him; so none can know the things of God, but the Spirit of God. Shall God be God, and not have peculiar wayes and Methods of Acting, not to be fathomed or understood by man? He himselfe hath told us to prevent our search, that his wayes are not as our wayes, nor his thoughts as our thoughts. He is not tied to our Narrow Definitions of Just and Injust, they are words only that bind us, but can lay no constraint upon him, who acts, like himselfe, in a Soveraigne and Unlimited manner. Now, as in an Engine, if we do not see the Springs and Wheelest that move it, it is impossible we should know how or which way it will turne; so since we cannot discerne or discover the
Principle, upon which the Great Mover and Disposer of all things acts, this being locked up and hid in the Cabinet of his own Will, to which only his Son and Spirit have a key, we have nothing to do but to submit in Silence. *Whatever God doth*, faith the Preacher, however it may appear outwardly Deformed or Mis-hapen, yet nothing can be added to it or taken from it: it hath in it selfe an Entire and Absolute Perfection; and the reason why God doth sometimes bring strange—and perplexing things to passe, is, that men might dispute! no, but that they might fear before him.

*Use.*

The use is, if it be so, that *no man is a Competent Judge of the Equity and Justice of Gods Proceedings*, then it should Teach us, to silence our Vaine Reasonings in the Matters of God: we should look upon them as Mysteries beyond our Reach, and therefore infinitely above our Cavill. Perhaps it is not a Rationall, I am sure it is not a Christian way of Arguing, *Non intelligo, ergo non Credo*. This I do not understand, I cannot perceive how such or such a point can be made out by Reason, or can consist with those Conclusions which I have embraced, therefore I will not believe it. It is the Task, and it should be the Triumph of Faith, to break through all such Difficulties, & to remove even Mountaines of seeming Contradictions. The Apostle calls Faith our Victory, by which we overcome the World; and if *Faith* overcomes the *World*, how much more ought it to overcome our Doubts, and our Reasonings, which are but as it were the Clouds and Misty part of the World. When our Saviour had discoursed concerning that great Mystery of Living and Feeding upon him by Faith; the Apostles presently cry out, *This is an hard say- ing, who can beare it?* this is so Absurd and Irrational, that there is no enduring it. Our Saviour perceiving how they staggered, he doth gently acquaint them with the Reason of their Erroneous Apprehension, viz. because they
they judged according to flesh, and humane appearance; the Spirit, faith he quickneth, the flesh profiteth nothing, my words they are Spirit and they are life. v.63.

To apply this—doth any dealing of God, put thee into an Anxious and a disputing State, by all means suspend thy censure, least thou shouldst charge God falsely; and search first into the principle by which thou proceedest, whether it be Flesh or Spirit: for reason it selie, till it be purged, till the dreggs be taken off and refined by the spirit of God, it is still but Flesh, a weake, low and carnall Principle, not at all fit for a Christian to own: but is indeed one of those earthly members, which we are commanded to subdue and Mortifie. To distrust our own understandings, not to passe sentence upon the first blush and offer of things, nor in spirituall concernsments to be led by Humane appearance, this is the first and most Necessary part of selfe-deniall.

This use may be improved in many Particulars, but there are two things I mainly intend it for.

1. First, to fix, and settle our spirits, in that great, and so much Controverted Doctrine, concerning Gods decrees of eternal Election and Reprobation.

2. Secondly To suppress and silence our murmurings, and repinings against God, in his Acts of Providence and outward dealings with us.

First the consideration of mans unfitness to Judge in the matters of God, ought to settle and fix us in the Doctrine of Election and Reprobation. That God hath from all eternity chosen some, on whom he will have mercy; and hath out of his good pleasure, repobated others, is cleare from this and many other places of Scripture. But to reconcile this to Humane reason, or to satisfy all the Objections which may be brought from Philosophy against it, I think the Apostle himselfe did not pretend to doe. Here in this verse, he seemes to Imply, that the best way to decide this
this controversy, is not to dispute it: and in another place, when in a kind of Extasie he cries out &c. &c. —Oh the
Depth, of the Riches of the knowledge and wisdom of God: How in
crutable are his judgments, and his ways unsearchable? Rom.11.33. certainly he did thereby intend to put a ftrip unto our enquiry, that we might not venture into a depth, which we could not fathome.

What is said by all sides in this dispute, I have often, as farre as my weakness would give me leave, considered, but yet could never find satisfaction in any thing, but in that question of the Apostles, and in bringing my reason to a Non plus.

For whatever the Arminians pretend that the Doctrine of Absolute Predestination is Blasphemous, and I know not what, because it seemes to make God the Author of Sin, yet indeed it doth no more do it, if it be well weighed, then their Doctrine of PreScience doth: for which reason, Socinus, who very well understood the Controversy, did not feare to deny even PreScience it selfe: since whatever is infallibly fore-known, must infallibly come to paffe, that is necessarily. For to distinguish between the ne-
cessity of the event, and the necessity of that which cau-
ses the event, is, I confesse a subtilty that I understand not, and am hopelesse ever to be satisfied in.

Leaving therefore the Disputers of this Age, to the mercileffe Fury of one another's Pens, I shall give some few Practicall rules, whereby whoever guides himselfe, will be freed from all those perplexities which his reason other-
wise would engage him in.

First, In all doubts never enquire what is rational, but what is revealed: the Word of God alone, which is the ground of our Faith, ought to be the object of our search. If you find this Doctrine, that God hath prepared some, even for everlasting destruction, whilst he hath compassion on others, and that meereely to manifest his own Glory——if this
this Doctrine be plainly laid down thee, then farewell Reason, and let your Faith on worke, to find out carefully of which number you your selves are. For there are the Ἑως ὅσεως and the Ἀπάλογον the Saved and the Lost, whose condition is as sure and Irreversible as if they were in Possession of it already.

Secondly, let no doubts or Perplexities take you off from your obedience. As no man needs fear to embrace Gospel-Truth upon its own terms, so neither ought he by any consequences of vaine & Carnall reasoning to be withdrawn from the doing of his duty. He that finds in himself such a frame, that he is resolved to goe on, and leave the Issue to God, though he perish yet he will trust in him; he will find at last all his darknesse and doubtings cleared up and scattered: for then we believe indeed, when with Abraham we act even against & beyond all Humane Probability.

Thirdly—Be often asking your selves this Question with the Apostle—what am I, that I should limit the Almighty, or Jude the Holy one of Israel? What are we, poor dust and ashes, that we should looke up to God except it be with trembling and amazement: to admire and not to dispute his doings? For what are we, that we should be prescribing rules to him, and finding out new ways and methods of salvation, others then God himself hath been pleased to discover? What are we, that we should sit upon the Decrees of God, and staine the wisedome of his counsells, with the dirt and mire of our own fancies? This Impartial selfe examination will serve to cure, or at least to allay our Curiosity.

Lastly—In all disputes and doubts: ever think that part of the tenet safest, which doth least Humor mans Pride, and doth most advance Gods Glory: we cannot think too meanly and humbly of our selves, nor can we too much advance and exalt Gods Soverainity. Tis this on which the Justice of all Gods proceedings is grounded: let God be Great and Glorious.
Mans Unfitnesse to Dispute

Glorious, though every man be miserable. To make God all in all, besides that it is our duty, is likewise nothing else but an Anticipation of happinesse, and is by the Apostle recorded—to be the Blessed Posture, of our future state. 1 Cor. 15. 28.

Secondly, The consideration of our Incompetence to judge the equity of Gods proceedings, serves to suppress and moderate all repinings at the Providence of God in his outward dispensations. No one thing is so great an inducement to Atheisme, & direct denyall of God; as to distrust the wisedome & equity of his Providence. David confesseth that the temptation arising from hence, did so farre prevale upon him, that his feet had at most slipped—i.e. he was just then sliding, even almost going into some erroneous and blasphemous conceit about this matter. The temptation was taken from the prosperity of the wicked—1 was envious at the foolish-faith he, v. 3. when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. Cul malis bene sit, has been a question that much puzzled the Heathen world, and some of them have many excellent sayings about it: but to speak the truth, they seeme to be only things of wit, rather then of serious judgment: for this is certaine, who ever sticks long upon this question, cannot be guiltlesse: since reason cannot resolve it—When I sought to know this, faith David, it was too painfull for me. v. 16. I did endeavour to debate and argue the case by my own reason, and from thence to answer my scruples, but I could not doe it, the objection did still prevale and overmaster me. What did David then? we find that he went into the Sanctuary of God, v. 17. he consulted the Oracle, and there he found the reason of their Advancement—And then he concludes that discourse, with taxing himsfelfe of great folly, for not taking this course sooner, but giving so much scope and latitude to his corrupt reasoning—So foolish was I and ignorant, I was as a Beast before thee. v. 22.

That
That which was David's practice ought to be ours, when we are set upon with the same temptation, we have lived to see as great variety of strange providences as any nation under Heaven; nor is the reason of this as yet revealed, we cannot yet spell out God's meaning, but certainly he has a great work doing, which will in due time be accomplished.

So likewise in all particular events which concerne us, let us not so much consider and reflect upon the things we see and feel, as upon the hand which sent them. This will either ease our burdens, or at least make us bear them with more cheerfulnesse if we consider that God laid them on, whose Power we cannot resist, whose wisedome we ought not to question.

Let us stop our mouths, and quiet our discontents with this, that God is in the cloud, that he works all things not according to his will barely, though that was enough, but according to the counsell of his will. There is a wisedome and designe in every thing though we cannot reach it.

Many impatient Jonahs there are in the World, who think it becomes them to quarrell and contest with God, though they have but left their gourd. Whose spirit is like a troubled Sea, any small wind will raise a storme and beget a tempest in them.

Let all such hearken to that advice of Hamah--Take no more so exceeding proudly, let not Arrogancy come out of your mouth, for our God is a God of knowledge, by him Actions are weighed--And not Actions onely, but events likewise:there are no such things as rash, casuall and unpremeditated events:but that part of the skale, which falls to our lot, whether for good or bad, comes onely, because God is so pleased to order and turne the balance.

FINIS.
GODS
Absolute Election
OF
A certaine and limited Number unto
Eternaill Life:
Asserted and Cleared out of

OXFORD,
Printed by H. HALL, 1659.
He Apostle Paul having in a large discourse deduced Christian Religion from its very Originall, and shewed, how in the severall ages of the World, God still carried on the same designe for the salvation of men by Jesus Christ, as he that was not onely foretold, but figured in all their Legall Worship: you find—v.45. the Jewes contradicting and blaspheming:—i. either railing on Christ, or else reviling Paul, and ignominiously slighting and traducing the Doctrine which he had delivered.

Whereupon the Apostle παρακάτακτοι—i. speaking freely, or plainly tells them that the losse and damage by so doing would onely redound to themselves for hereby, viz. by refusing the tender of Salvation so freely offered, they evidenced that they judged themselves unworthy so great a mercy, and therefore they being, as it were Αυτοκτονοῦσαι, men selfe-condemned, he would have no more to doe with them, but from thence forward publish the Doctrine of the Gospell to the Gentiles: intimating that God till then had empaled his Church, and confined it to the narrow circuit of Juda, thereby as it were imprisoning that sun in a lanterne: but now God would resume his whole right, that
the earth might be the Lords, and the fulnesse thereof: excluding no place, restraining no people from the benefit and comfort, which would flow from the light of the Gospell steaming in and shining amongst them.

Whereupon it followes v.48. That when the Gentiles heard this they were glad, and Glorified the Word of the Lord - And as many as were Ordained to Eternall Life believed.

From the words I intend to insist upon and clear, two Propositions.

1. First—That there are some, and that a definite and limited number, which are by God from all eternity ordained unto Eternall Life or salvation.

2. Secondly that the reason why one man believes, i.e. embraces the means of salvation, and another doth not, is finally to be resolved into God's eternal Election of the one, and reprobation or rejection of the other.

Both these doctrines are clearer from the words of the text, for this phrase—"Οπι πηγμενοι ήτοι—&c. As many as were Ordained believed implies, first that some certaine persons were ordained, whereby they are distinguished from the rest of the common hearers, and likewise it is added as a reason, why these believed, while the others continued in their impenitence: they were Ordained, therefore they Believed.

Before I prove the first Proposition viz: That there are some and that a certaine number appointed unto life,—which I think is evident in the text—I must not omit, that this Word- πηγμενοι hath been variously rendred, and many attempts have been made to draw it from its true and native signification. The summe of what they say is briefely this that πηγμενοι signifies Actively—Quis est parans Vita aeterna, suitly disposed and qualified for the Gospell—so that Ordained according to them, are not Ordained by God, but such as are Ordained by themselves; Thus Socinus, Grotius, and
his interpreter Dr Hammond.

That these men who do professedly serve a side, and are unwilling to own any thing more in Religion than they can reconcile to reason, should thus strangely (I will not say Ignorantly, for it is too much Learning that causes this madness) but contrary to all rules of Grammar, and Analogy of the Greek tongue, make a passive verb signify Actively, is to me no great wonder: for if they did not this, they would loose their cause, and then what would become of their reputation with their followers; which, whatever becomes of the truth, must be secured: so impossible is it to drive on those two contrary trades, of Gospel obedience, and Humane Applause.

But since the Learned and Ingenuous Mr Mede suffered himselfe to be so farre gone in his Criticisms, as to render this Word—In Precinctu—i. such who are in a posture to lay hold upon, and candidates of Eternal life: quod est de Agmine et Classe fuerant credentium. So that ῥεταγματισθαι shall be not Ordained but Ordered—i. modo militari, In ranke and file as it were, marshalled and Embattelled unto eternal life: This is a conceit so streined, so unsuitable to Scripture language: and withall so much misbecoming the learning of that Worthy man, that I cannot passe it over without observing these two things,

1. That it is a very hard matter for the soberest and best tempered Christians, such as I take Mr Mede to have been, to captivate their reason and to subdue their Learning unto the plainness and simplicity of the Gospel.

2. That there is great need for all those who are students in Divinity, and who designe themselves for that Honourable, and never enough valued Profession of Preaching the Gospel, that they make themselves worthy of it, as by all other excellencies, so especially by carefull and diligent search of the Scriptures in their Originall Languages.
Languages: And that, not only because he ought not to
Prophecy who knowes not how to interpret, but left men
who pretend to skill and exactnesse in those Tongues, doe
abuse our ignorance to an Embracing of their errors,
while we are not able to distinguish between a true Text
and a bad comment. For I doe not see how we can ra-
tionally refuse any Interpretation though false, if we are
not able knowingly to make out a better of our owu.

But for the clearing of this Text very little skill will
serve, for who knowes not, that knowes any thing of
Greeke, that πωμικοι was never yet taken Actively, and
that the word cannot be otherwise rendred here, then it
is every where else-viz. Ordained or Appointed. Thus
Rom. 13. 2. the Powers that are, are πωμικοι τοις 3ε
Appointed of God. And Acts. 17. 26. God hath bound or
limited κα η ο δα των ποτεντων πασιν the fore-appointed seasons—i.
God hath set a fixed and certaine period unto the dura-
tion of those severall changes and scenes of time, which
be himselfe hath preordained: so in this place πωμικοι εκς
ζων Αναφισιν are those that are by God certainly and insallibly
appointed unto eternall life. God being not only τωμις
χρηματοι, the disposer of seasons, but of persons.

These are they who by the Apostle Paul are called
πωμικοι—the saved i. saved allready—whose salvation is as
sure and certaine, as if they were allready put into full
Possession of it.

In another place they are stiled προορισθεντες foreordained
or predeffined to Grace and Glory: and that we might not
doubt, what it was that gave the birth, and rise to such a
gracious appointment— The Apostle addes that it was
κατα ποθεν, according to the purpose of him, who doth not
wait nor depend upon outward motives, but works all
things according to the Counsell of his own will.

Rom. 11. 5. They are called διακρινθες, the Election of
Grace i. such persons of whose Election Grace only
was
was the Cause; and v. 7. simply 'Election', i.e. those whom God hath called and chosen out from the Rest of Mankind, and designed for Everlasting Happiness.

The force of these and many other Texts of Scripture to the same purpose, make all sides agree, that Some indeed are Appointed unto Life, but who these are, that God himself doth not know, so Socinns: that though some are Appointed, yet there is a Possibility for All, so Arminius. That is in short, that Some shall be saved is Certaine; but that the Persons and their Number is unlimited and uncertain.

Before therefore I prove the Point by Scripture, give me leave to bewaile a little the sad Condition of those men, who take a Liberty to Interpret Revealed Truth by Rationall Notions; for in so doing, through a just Judgment of God upon their Curiosity, they are forced to run into and maintaine those Fond and Ridiculous Errors, which a Sober man would blush to own.

As in this Case, can it be imagina#ble that God should designe any of his Creatures unto Eternall Life, and yet not know who they are? as Socinus affirmes, who brings in God, as the Plutarchians did of Old, not chusing of Person, but Propositions; not designing this or that man to Salvation, and so to Faith Absolutely by vertue of his Prerogative; but only to Salvation Indefinitely upon supposition of Faith, which whether any will embrace or not, he doth not feare to Assert, that God himselfe doth not know. So carelesse are men of Gods Honour, while they Study and Contend for their own. For if the Case be so indeed, God doth onely leave himselfe in the Darke, and doth not exercise his Power and Prescience about his Noblest Creature, Man.

The Doctrine of Universall Redemption, though not so barefaced, yet labours with the same Absurdity: for if God
God knowes who shall be saved, then it is certaine there is no Possibility for all, or else we must conclude Gods Knowledge to be onely Guesse; and maintaine a too Apparent Contradiction: for if God knowes who shall be saved, then it is evident that those onely shall be saved, who are so known: whereas if there be a Possibility left for all, then it is Certaine, that God did not infallibly know, who they were that should be saved, but left the whole to Hazard.

I must confesse I doe not willingly desire to deale this way in Reproving any Error: for had I lette to say in Reason then I have, for Gods Eternall Absolute Election, yet the Scripture being so Full and Positive in it, to that alone I would resigne and give up my Faith, and not willingly suffer my selfe to partake either of their Fate, or of their Folly, who cannot endure to be Taught, but in Spirituall, and therefore Inconceivable Things, would faine be wise above what is written.

For that there is a Set and Limited Number appointed to Salvation, appeares from Scripture, in that God is said to Know who are his, 2 Tim. 2, 19. i.e. Not their Natures onely, but their Names also: for therefore our Saviour Luc. 10. 20. bids his Apostles rejoice in that their Names were written in Heaven, put into Gods Muster-roll and Catalogue of Eternity, from whence they could never be blotted out.

Known unto the Lord, faith the Apostle, are all his works from Ever, Act. 15. 18. i.e. so known as to be disposed and ordered by him, nay therefore known, because ordered, for so to distinguish between Gods Knowledge and his Power as in his Actions ad extra to separate one from the other, is to speake neither Senfe nor Scripture: for whom God for knew, them, all them, & onely them, not in their Qualifications, but in their Respective persons, did he predefine to be conformable to the Image of his Son.
Rom. 8. 29. And if of an Elect person all the Haires are Math. 10. 30. Numbred, how much more of Christ's Mystical Body, are all the Members numbred? which Body is already compleat as to God's Purpose concerning it, and to Imagine that any shall fill a place there, whom God doth not already know as particularly, as if they were Actually Existing, is to measure Eternity by time, and to make God like our selves Fraile and Fallible.

The Reason of this is, because every Act of God is Absolute: as his Nature is, so are the Actions which flow from it, Unconditionall and Irrespective.

For the clearing of which Reason, it will be necessary to explain in the Act of Election. 1. How God, who Elects, 2. How man, who is elected, are to be Considered.

For the First, Many there be that think God in the Act of Election, is to be Considered as a Judge; and hence argue against this Absolute and Irrespective Election from those Known and Obvious places of Scriptures, ---Shall not the Judge of all the Earth do right? Shall God accept persons? or preferre one before another, when all are Equall? how is this Reconcileable to his Justice?

I answer, that in the Act of Election God is not to be considered as a Judge, because 1. A Judge as a Judge, is tied to a Rule, which he may not Transgress; but what Rule can be Imagined to Tye God, except what he hath set himslef? which in the Act of Election, that being Eternall, and flowing onely from the Will of God, cannot rationally be supposed.

2. The Business of a Judge, as a Judge, is to Bestow Rewards and Punishments according to Merit, but in Election the Motive onely on God's part is Grace, and the End is Glory.

3. God is not at all Obliged to Man; he that made man, may freely appoint him to what Ends he pleases, without doing him any Injury: for hath not the Potter power over his
his Clay? though for a man to plead with God in this Case is somewhat a worse Solecism, then for Clay to quarrell with the Potter. Since there Matter strives only with its Fashioner, but here Nothing contends with its Maker. There the Clay though it be not a vessel of Honour, yet remains Clay still; but here not the Quality only, but the Substance likewise is subject to the Pleasure of its Framer.

Lastly, The Apostle, being to give a Reason of this Difference between one man and another, afscribes it altogether to Gods good pleasure; and for a Proof of that Affertion, he alludes a Saying of God himselfe Rom.9.15. I will have Mercy on whom I will have Mercy.

So that the Act of God in chusing some to Everlasting Life, and refusing others, is not an Act of Justice, for they neither did nor could deserve it; nor is it properly an Act of Mercy, for that any should be saved at all was meetly from Mercy, but that these rather then others, was not properly from Mercy; because Mercy is Equall to all that Equally deserve it, or Equally stand in need of it, but here between Equalls a distinction is made. Election therefore is an Act of Soveraigne Will, the Apostle calls it 'εὐδοκήσαν ὁ θεός συνθέσθαι ἐπὶ Εφ. 1.5. The good pleasure of Gods will, which as none can resift, so none ought to Question; for neither is Man stronger than God, nor ought he to think himselfe Wiser. Thus God in the Act of Election is not to be Considered ut ÿdex, sed ut Dominus; as a Judge, but as a Soveraigne.

For the second, viz. how the Persons, who are Elected, are to be Considered. Some affirme they are to be looked upon as Believers, viz. That God foreseeing some would embrace Faith and Salvation, when it was offered them, he did therefore chuse some unto Everlasting Life. And this Conceit is not onely maintained by our Moderne Arminians, but, that I may not seeme to mince the matter, was in gene-
general the opinion of almost all the Greek and Latin Fathers, except only Augustine of the Primitive and Purer Times. They who have read them, will affirm as much, and they who doubt may read their Sayings to this Purpose, faithfully Collected by Vossius in his Historia Pelagiana.

But this Supposition, however Plausible (as indeed what is not, that gives man a Power) and though backed with so much Authority, yet seems to me to be directly contrary both to Reason and Scripture.

First to Reason, because

1. This puts something as a Cause to move God's will: for if Faith foreseen in man were the Cause why God chose him, then something without God shall have an Influence upon him: which certainly is very Absurd, if not Blasphemous: for if God shall be supposed to take a Reason of his Actings from something without himselfe, that thing must needs alter him, and consequently be greater than he.

Secondly, because this very Faith thus foreseen is the Gift of God, as the Apostle affirms Eph. 2. 8. and none that I know deny it: so that if Faith foreseen were the Cause of choosing any, the Decree of God must thus be ordered.---

I foresee that I will give such a one Faith, therefore I decree that I will save him, i.e. I decree to give the means, before I have yet appointed the End: which is a Method of Marshalling God's Decrees, that a knowing Heathen would be ashamed to think of.

More might be urged, but I hasten to Scripture Confutation: we find our Saviour saies of his Disciples (which who sees not how Applicable it is to all the Elect) that he chose them, they had not chosen him, Joh. 15. 16. but if Faith foreseen were a Cause, he must have said the cleane contrary, for then he would have chosen them, because they had first chose him.

And
And the Apostle John 1 Ep. 4. 10. sayes, this is love, not that we loved God first, but that he loved us, and for that reason sent his Son, not as foreseeing our Affection, but as pursuing the Intent, and procuring in us the Effects of his own.

And the Apostle Paul doth every where assert Faith to be a Fruit and not a Cause of Election, that we are chosen unto Good Works, not for them, i.e., that they who are Predestined, shall certainly Believe, not they who Believe were therefore Predestined, which is the summe of his Discourse Eph. 1.

So that in the Act of Election, men are to be considered as meerly Passive, i.e., as Creatures, not as Believers, as such who were liable to be disposed by God how he pleased, but had no Possibility of meriting any thing from him.

This is affirmed of the Israelites in Generall, Deut. 7. that God chose them, not because they were better, or more Righteous than other People, but because he set his Heart upon them. And left they should perhaps pride themselves with a Conceit, that for their own worth and Excellence this Priviledge was given them, they are expressly told there was no such matter, for they were a stiffenecked and Rebellious People, Deut. 9. 6. Able rather to thwart, and, if possible, to undo Gods Election, then to procure it.

Thus we find Math. 11. that Christ preached the Gospel to Bethsaida, and to them of Capernaum, who were so far from meriting, that our Saviour affirmes of them, Sodom and Gomorrah had they enjoyed the like Favour, would have been much more repentant then they.

And to conclude in Particulars, the Apostle Paul handling this very Argument, and intending for ever, so far as Scripture evidence will reach, to silence the Disputer of this World, that God alone may have the Glory of his Grace, he instances in Jacob, who was by Virtue of this Abso-
of some to Eternall Life.

Absolute Election preferred before Esau, (the Temporal Condition serving to shadow out the Eternall) for lest any Imagination should arise, as if Jacob in himselfe were the more deserving of the Two, he faies it was done before any of them had done either Good or Evil, Rom. 9. 11. And if it should be Asked, how it came to passe that one was taken, and the other left; what did induce God to put such a Difference between Two, who were Morally Equall, and Naturally Esau was to have the Advantage, the Apostle addes, that it was done to this End, that the Purpose of God according to Election might stand, not of Works, but of him that calleth. Wherein the Apostle pleading the Cause of Gods Honour, and being Jealous of his Prerogative, resolveth all things into Gods Purpose, and referres us thither to seek the Ultimate Difference of men’s either Temporall or Eternall Condition. And he that will not acquiesce, when he thus finds it written, but will bring his Wit to strive and Wrestle against the Will of God, he cannot alter that, but onely does unhappily evince to himselfe, that while he continues that Humor, he is not of the Number of Gods Elect, for all that are, a Willing, Humble, and Obedient People.

Against this which hath been urged, there is that I know of but one Considerable Objection; and that is, if the Number of those which shall be saved be limited and Certaine, so that there is no Possibility for more, how comes it to passe that the Prophets and Apostles, are so Importunate, with all indifferently to Come in, and Repent, that they might be saved: and God himselfe is often brought in in Scripture chiding and Expostulating with Sinners for destroying themselves, and for refusing Salvation, which seems to be a Vain and Ludi-
crous thing, if the Number be so Set already, that there is no Room for more.

This Objection is yet made more Tragicall by the many Heavy charges and Enditements, which are drawn up
up against this, as some tile it, Partial and Cruell dea-
ling, from the Common Places of Gods Justice and Mer-
cy, which men who love themselves are very willing to
Enlarge, and therefore easily hearken to those who dare
declame upon such Subjects. But these Vaine and Emp-
try Flourishes, however insoluble they may seem to
some, who are guided by the first Impression and found
of Words, are of no Importance, if we fix Election onely
upon Gods Will; for this will presently cut off all Witty
Cavills, if we can prove that God will indeed have it so;
and therefore I look upon the former Objection as their
maine strength, because it immediately tends to Practife,
and seems to beget this Opinion, that Gods Secret and
Revealed will do Thwart & Contradict each other. There-
fore I answer

1. That though few shall be saved, and those Few deter-
mined, yet because they are unknown to us, we are to look upon
all as in a saveable Condition. Thus the Prophets and A-
postles did in their so frequent and Repeated Instances
with those to whom they preached, and their Example
we are to follow: For peremptorily to conclude against
any, and to deny them the meane of Salvation, because
they are not Elected, is an Uncharitable Presumption in
us, which we shall more heavily account for, then they
will do for their Disobedience and Unbelief.

2. There is no other way for those who are Elected, to
come to the Knowledge of the Truth, but by a Generall Pro-
posal of it Indifferently to all, which is our Saviours mea-
ning in those many Parables, which intimate a Promiscu-
ous Call; from whence he concludes, that though many
are Called, yet few are Chosen; and we may invert the
Proposition thus, though Few are Chosen, yet many
must be called. In this World the Tares and the Wheat
must be equally Tended, and though they grow together
with some discernable Difference, yet it is not the Mini-
sters
of some unto Eternal Life.

Lastly, There is a Twofold end in Preaching the Gospel; the first and principal is to bring in God's Elect, but Secondarily it serves to condemn the Reprobate, and to make their Damnation just. For what can they pleade at the last day to Justifie their Unbeliefe; since when they were Called as it were by name, yet they did willingly exclude themselves, and thereby, as the Apostle layes of the Jewes here, judged themselves Unworthy of Eternal Life.

Thus the Apostle saies that God's Divinity and Spiritual Being was discovered in the Creation: and if it was asked to what Purpose, since so few did either Believe or Worship him as they ought, he answers, that it was for this End — εἰς τὸ ἐξ οὐρανοῦ κατακόρυφον, Rom. 1. 20. That they might have nothing to Pleade, no quirk nor Apology left to Excuse their Atheism and Idolatry.

And if our Gospel be hid, faith he, it is hid to those which are lost; 2 Cor. 4. 3. discovered to them, but hid in them, because they do not take paines, as they should, to search out its Inward and Spiritual meaning.

So we are, faith he, ἐνωπία ἴδου, a sweet smelling Sacrifice to God, 2 Cor. 1. 13. both ἐν τοῖς ἐξ οὐρανών, and ἐν τοῖς ἁπάντοις, in the saved and in the lost. i.e. We do God good and acceptable Service, when we preach the Word, whether it serves to Save or to Condemne; for in the one God's Mercy, in the other God's Justice is manifested. Those that come in will find mercy, for thereto they were appointed: those that stand out, shall be sure of Justice, because when they were summoned as well as others, yet they would not, because they would not. They did voluntarily conteemne the Word of Life, and therefore can blame none but themselves, if at last they find it a Word of Death.

If any think this Harsh and Severe, I cannot deny but it is so, and thus the Apostle thought it Rom. 9. 22. when he
he sayes, that God herein did manifest his Anger as well as his Power. Nay, he goes somewhat farther, and speaking of the same Decree, Rom. 11. 22. he calls it *apendo*, the Extreme Rigor and Sharp Severity of God, but from thence he doth not take occasion to enveigh against it, as our Bold and Blasphemous disputers doe, but concludes as it were in a Rapture, v. 33. Ω€δεό proposals, Oh the Depth &c.

As for those many Expressions wherein God is said to declare his willingnesse that All should be saved, (as 1Tim. 2. 4. &c.) they may either be Interpreted of Gods will as declared by the Preachers of it, which is Indefinite to All that Believe and Repent: or else, they may be understood *επιεποναθια*, and spoken after the manner of men, in the same sense that God is said to have Eyes and Eares and other Bodily Parts, whereby he is pleased to render himselfe intelligible to us. For if God did indeed Will the Salvation of All, then it is Certaine that All would be saved, for God can do whatever he wills: but since it is manifest that All are not Saved, it is evident likewise that God did not will All should be saved, for who hath resisted his Will?

As for that Velleity, i.e. a kind of Longing, Wishing, or Woulding disposition in God, which some rashly bring in to salve their Phenomena by, since it is Ineffectuall and consequently Imperfect, it is altogether unfit to be ascribed to God, for it is nothing else but Infirmity and Want of Power in Man.

So much for the First Observation.

D. 2. The second Observation was this, that the Reason why one man believes, i.e. embraces the means of Salvation, and another doth not, is finally to be resolved into Gods eternall Election of the one, and Reprobation of the other: or more briefly thus, that only those who are ordained unto eternall Life, either do or can believe.
And the Reason is briefly this, because only those who are designed to the End, shall be made effectuall Partakers of the Means which leads unto it.

Thus our Saviour Math.13. rendering a Reason why some did not understand his Doctrine, he gives this, because to them it was not given: and the Apostle calls the Gospell a Saviour of Life, only Σώζωμαι to the Saved. 1 Cor. 1 (i. e.) Actually designed to Salvation. And the same Apostle exhorting the Thessalonians to Faith and Love, he gives this as a Motive, 1 Thes. 9. because they were not appointed to Wrath, but to obtaine Salvation by Jesus Christ. Where by the way, we may take notice, that a Certaine Knowledge of our Eternall Election is so far from hindering any in the Practise of Godliness, that it is by the Apostle used as an Argument to quicken their Endeavour, as if he had said, because God hath Appointed you unto Eternall Life, therefore labour after the Means which leads unto it.

There is a settled Chaine and Connexion of Causes, which do immutably inferre one another: To be saved presupposeth Obedience, That, Faith, That, the Gift of God, and that runs up to the Highest Link, which is the Grace and Favour of God to every poor believer. It is certaine that & πάντων καὶ πάντων, all have not the Grace, because they want the Gift of Faith: that being not thrown at Randome on all, but reserved as a Special Blessing for Gods chosen ones; and them he calls, while he leaves others to their Naturall Hardnesse and Impenitence.

It is not in Vaine or Figuratively spoken onely 2 Cor. 5.17. that every Believer is καὶ νεωτέρων, said to be new borne, againe created and Fashioned &c. but these Phrases imply this Necessary Truth, that as none but those who are created men, can put forth the Acts of men, and such Creation they could not procure nor contribute to themselves, because as yet they were not; so none but those who
who are Created unto Good Workes, can live in them, because Naturally they want a Principle, whereby they should understand or Relish them. And this is the Benefit of that Eternall Election, whereby God workes in all that he loves all their workes both in them and for them, Phil. 2. 13. that they might know and Confess to the praise of his Glorious Grace, that it is not in him that Wills, nor in him that Runs, but only in God that shews Mercy, Rom. 9. 16.

Before I make any Use, I must prevent an Objection, which every man Naturally is ready to Urge, and not to take Notice of it, were to prevaricate with the Truth. The Objection is this, if it be so that Some, and that a Limited Number are Appointed to Life, and onely such can believe, then it follows that we may live as we list, for if we are Appointed to Life we shall be saved, God will in his good time Accomplish his Purpose concerning us, which all our Endeavour can neither Promote nor Alter.

To this Objection which most Carnall Minds do not onely Reason but Live by, I may Answer as the Apostle did, when having asserted the Freenesse of Grace, and how altogether undeserved it was on our part, he brings in a profane person asking this Question, shall we continue in Sin, that Grace may Abound? Rom. 6. i.e. what shall we put God to it, and Try if we can Out-fin the Riches of his Mercy? To this the Apostle replies only ἂν ἔρωτιτε, let it not be, or it may not be, such a Thought can never arise in any ones Heart, who does Truly understand what Mercy means.

So may I say here, if any who conceives himselfe Ele-
ceted, shall draw this Conclusion from hence, because God hath chosen me, and I am sure of my Salvation, therefore I will run-on and provoke him dailly, and strive as it were, to blot out and Crosse his Decree: ὃς ἔρωτιτε, Thou canst not do it, thou canst not apprehend that God loved thee.
thee with an everlasting loves, and singled thee out from the
lump of mankind when so many millions were to be undone
eternally, but it will worke upon thee, and melt all thy affecti-
ons into a gratefull returne of service unto that God, to whom
thou art obliged for so infinite and undeserved mercy.

But if any who hath a mind to live wickedly shall Argue--
If I am not designd to life I shall be damned, let me do what I
can--I answer.

First, that there is no possibility for any truth to be so cleare, but
that evill men may abuse it to their own destruction: and I believe
every one sees how the making Gods decrees conditionall will
lead a corrupt mind to the same Inference, For he may as well
say--If God foresee, that I shall believe, I shall believe; and so
in the meane while take his liberty;

Secondly, Consider that as Gods decree of Election hath no
influence to Necessitate the will of any, but he that believes
though ordained to it, yet believes freely and willingly; so the
Decree of Reprobation hath no influence at all to the Damning of
any: because though those who are Reprobated shall certainly
be damned, yet sentence shall not passe upon them according
to the act of Gods Reprobation, but according to the merit of
their works. Gods decree is made by power, but it's executed by
Law, and therefore while thy damnation is yet uncertaine, doe
not dispute thy selfe into such a state, as to endeavour to make
it just.

Lastly, The Rule of our Obedience is not Gods decree but Gods
command. Moses when he had given the Law, exhorts them
to walke according to it, and to check their Inquisitiveness, tells
them that they were not to Ascend into Heaven, there to pry and
search into Gods Decree concerning themselves, but the word
was nigh them, in their hearts that they might do it, Deut.11.12.

And the reason is bottomed upon that eternall and unanswera-
ble truth--Secret things belong to God, but things revealed to us--
that they may be our rule to walke by.

So that in short we are so to ascribe all Power & Praise to God,
as to looke upon and acknowledge him the great and supreme disposer of all things—but yet we are so to live in our obedience and submission to his command, as if nothing was at all decreed concerning us, but that we were wholly left to the counsell and power of our own will.

For if we conclude against our selves, and live like reprobates, we are sure to perish.

But if with hearty and zealous endeavour we strive to doe the will of God, and leave the event unto his mercifull providence, against such, I dare boldly affirme it, there is no condemnation, and the world shall sooner perish then such a soule mis-carry.

Therefore the use I shall make of this discourse, so necessary for these cavilling times, is to exhort us all that we would leave off disputing and fall to practise.

Since it is certaine that the foundation of God standeth sure which is this, that God knoweth who are his, — i. e. knoweth them definitely, we may vexe and distemper our selves by wrangling, but we shall not be able to shake or alter that.

All the while we are disputing we are like Abrahams Ram caught by the hornes in the Thicket, when we should be offered up in sacrifice, we are vainly strugling to entangle and snare our selves with our own Dilemmas.

It would be counted madness in a Traveller, who has a great way to goe, and but a little time to performe his Journies in, if he should leave his road, and needlessly run into a wood, where, besides the trouble-somenesse of the passage, he is sure to loose his time, if not himselfe, and in the end sit down to lament his folly.

No lese unwise are we if we leave the safe and known path of Gods Commandments, to wander in the endlessse maze and Labyrinth of Gods decrees.

If in worship, when a man strives to serve God more strictly or in a more specious manner then the rule warrants him, his whole devotion is slighted with a quis Requisivit hæc? who bad you
you trouble your selfe with these things? how much more severely shall he be reprooved, who ventures upon a forbidden as well as undoing curiosity?

In short all the while we are arguing, we are out of Gods way; and in the way onely of our own inventions; and till we get out of it, we may justly feare that the issue will be, confusion, amazement, doubting, and at last despair.

If men would but once be sober in their reasonings, it would appeare but a modest request, that God and his word alone should have the honour, above and beyond our private conceptions. For he will be found just, when he comes to Judgment, but woe be to that man who dares arraign him?

Whatever vaine men may anogate to themselves, and upon the confidence of superficial and empty Rhetorick, venture to enterne edle with, and to passe their censure upon matters so infinitely above their reach, yet they will find at last, that obedience is better then knowledge, that selfe denyall is the onely Gospel-sacrifice, and of all Christians, the humblest Christian is the best. Therefore

Secondly, Since there are certaine Number appointed unto Eternall Life, let us give our selves no rest, till we can comfortably pronounce to our selves that we are of that Number.

Many are the signes by which a man may judge of his eternall condition, and one of them is expressed here in the Text—That who were Ordained unto Eternall life believed. Believed the word of the Lord, concerning salvation by Christ.

So that goe presently and ask your selves this question, do I believe? i. Am I willing to receive Christ, and Salvation? Yes, perhaps you will say, I am willing.

Then go on farther and ask, but am I willing to receive Christ upon his owne Termes, to acknowledge my owne wretchedness without him, to fly to him, as I would to Shore out of a Tempelt? Do I see my selfe in so Undone and lost a Condition, that nothing but his satisfaction can relieve me? then goe to Christ,
Gods Absolute Election

Christ, he calls thee, he calls thee as effectually, as if thou heardst a voice from Heaven saying Come: *Come unto me thou weary and laden Soul, and I will give thee rest,* Matt. 11. 28. Come with all thy Sins, nay with all thy Fears upon thee; and I will take thy Burden, I will settle thy Distractions, and speake to thy soule in the midst of its Disquiets, Soul be at peace, I can make up all thy Wants, and am able to save to the uttermost.

If after this thou canst be content with nothing but Christ, if thou art willing to quit all for him, and to count the world only as a stage, where either thy Faith or Patience must be daily exercised: if thou dost find that sweetness in the Face of a Reconciled God, as no earthly enjoyment could bribe thee to a willing commision of any knowne sin against him, then goe and enter into thy Rest, and take an earnest of thy future joy. For if the case be thus with thee, and thou perseverest in it, Heaven and Happinesse are as surely thine as if thou wert already there; and even while thou livest, thou art placed in so high a sphere of Felicity and content, as all the laboured and perishing comforts of this world, cannot amount to fill up one minute of thy entire satisfaction.

This deserves to be more particularly insisted upon, and some motives likewise might be used to press all unto this duty of examining their future state.

But certainly they who know what Eternity is, and how near they are to it, how every minute, for ought they know, may waft them thither, they will not long put off or deferre the enquiry: for all the while they doe so, they evince to themselves that they have no lot nor portion in the Heavenly Inheritance. For though both Grace and Glory are bestowed Freely, yet wee may sadly conclude, that they are not designed for those who looke not after them.

FINIS.