

ETERNAL REGISTER,

OF THE

PEOPLE OF GOD

THE SUBSTANCE

OF

TWO SERMONS,

PREACHED IN

BETHEL CHAPEL,

BRIXTON HILL,

LORD'S DAY, AUGUST 2, 1829.

By WILLIAM SEATON .

“I will not blot out his name out of the book of life.”

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ADVERTISEMENT.

It is at the earnest request of the author's friends, that he has been persuaded to submit the following discourse to the public eye, having himself no idea at the time of studying it, that it would be required to appear in print.

The author, as a witness for God — a herald of the everlasting gospel, in thus publishing his testimony to the truth as it is in Jesus, would implore the Lord's blessing upon his labours: and if in any degree he shall condescend to make use of them, wither to comfort his elect family or to turn the hearts of the disobedient to an acknowledgment of the truth his highest wishes will be realized.

The Eternal Register,

&c. &c.

“The book of Life of the Lamb, slain from the foundation of the world.” Rev. xiii. 8.

Solemnity, and majesty, characterize all the declarations of God’s most holy word.

Our text is introduced in a very solemn and awful manner. The whole verse reads thus, “and all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, [The Beast] whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.” — Now those who are not written in this book, are a family distinct from that, to which I trust most of my hearers belong. And as the consideration of the former part of the verse, which involves the fearful condition of those, who are the worshippers of the man of sin, the son of perdition, might not be so profitable a subject for our present meditation; I shall the rather confine myself to that part of the verse, first read, and speak from it with reference to those who are written in the book; for the declaration concerning those who are not written, certainly implies that there are those who *are* written.

A book, or books spoken of in scripture, are figurative expressions, as must be self-evident, for strictly and properly speaking, God has not, nor does he need such things. But in condescension to the weakness of our finite minds, the Lord is pleased to convey to us a knowledge of the great transactions, and riches of his grace, by metaphors and similes of things, with which we are most familiar. Men keep books, in which they insert

those things, the knowledge of which they would not lose, but keep in memory. So when we read in scripture of a book, as kept, and belonging to God, that which is denoted thereby, is a particular series of persons, or things, most perfectly known to God, and ever present before his view. And hence we read in scripture of several books; it is evident there is a book of *general providence*, developing Jehovah's predestination of the birth, life, and death of men with every incident connected with them, so that nothing falls out by chance, and contrary to God's eternal, and fixed arrangements of infinite wisdom. And indeed this is not only true of men, but holds good of all the creatures God has formed, hence "not a sparrow falls to the ground without his notice," Matt. x. 29. There are *books of Judgment* spoken of, in which are recorded the thoughts, words, and actions of men, "whether they be good or bad," Rev. xx. 12. These are mentioned in the plural number, as if each particular person, had his separate book, which denotes the exact and particular knowledge of God concerning men and things.

There is a *book of remembrance* also, which is kept by God concerning his peculiar people; and which intimates to us that particular regard and special notice, which our covenant God takes of all the spiritual acts of his people, yea everything done by them, springing from the life of grace within, and tending to glorify the name of Christ. The converse of the saints of God, who often speak good of his name to one another, and the very thoughts, and inexpressible desires of the weakest believer, are noted therein, as we are told by the prophet Malachi, iii. 16. And Jesus tells us that these things will be noticed, spoken of, and applauded by himself another day; "then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, (whose persons and works of faith, are had in everlasting remembrance) come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me," Matt. xxv. 84, 35, 36.

Many such instances of books might be enumerated, but having just noticed these, we shall come immediately to the text.

And First — We shall enquire what is to be understood by the book of life, here spoken of.

Secondly — We shall enquire what is, denoted by the writing of this book.

Thirdly — Notice to whom the book belongs.

And then Fourthly — What is said of him.

First — We shall enquire what is to be understood by the book of life, and,

I. — We observe that *it denotes Jehovah's eternal purpose of election to life*; which purpose was according to the good pleasure of his will, to display the glory of the divine perfections. In which purpose, Jehovah set up Christ as the Head, and representative of his church, and chose every individual of that church in him, as the members of his mystical body; giving *him* to the church as her Husband, and the church to him as his spouse, by one and the same infinite act of grace, and in bonds of unchanging love; declaring that he hated putting away. This is a Sovereign act of his will, to be traced up to his eternal foreknowledge with which it is interwoven, and from which, it is inseparable. Paul tells, us, nay, it is God himself by Paul, “whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate,” Rom. viii. 29. Now, as his foreknowledge involves his decrees, nothing is more certain, than that if his foreknowledge is proved, his election must be established. Even an old Socinian author could acknowledge, that “admitting the infallible prescience of all future contingents; the doctrine of the predestination of some particular persons to life, cannot be refuted.” This accounts for the craft and subtlety which the devil has displayed in devising a deeply laid scheme, for the purpose of getting professors of religion, to deny God's election of a people for himself. And in endeavouring to effect this object, he has been permitted to exercise so much darkening influence over the minds of Arminians, that they have many of them

outstripped acknowledged Socinians, in insulting the Majesty of heaven. — A very celebrated Arminian doctor of our own age, has gone so far as to assert, “that God did not foreknow who would be saved, and who would not; that he *could* have foreknown, but he *would* not foreknow,” which he says, “heightens the glory of his perfections.” I stand astonished at this daring blasphemy! Surely we may turn the apostle’s prediction, that “the time will come when men will not endure sound doctrine,” into descriptive language, and say the time is come. For if God could, but would not foreknow; what better is it, than saying, God *could* have been God, but *would* not be God, lest it should displease Arminians. Common sense would lead us to decide as much as this, even if the scriptures were silent on the subject, (which by the way, are very explicit.) With all reverence be it spoken; if Jehovah possess not eternal foreknowledge, it is impossible that he can be, a perfect and infinite being; so that to deny it, is to make him altogether such an one as ourselves.

Foreknowledge then, being absolutely necessary to Jehovah’s existence, he of necessity decreed; and in settling his decrees fixed upon Christ as the Head of the church, and appointed him as the Redeemer and Saviour of his people; hence Peter says, 1 Epistle, i. 20. “he was fore-ordained before the foundation of the world;” and by the same act of election, the whole church was “chosen in him before the foundation of the world.” Ephes, i. 4. Surely these scriptures ought to be enough to silence all free-will caviling. Not merely chosen *by* Christ as he is one of the persons in the adorable Trinity, whose will, purpose, and pleasure, are the same with the Father, and the Holy Ghost, but chosen *in* him; so when he was set up, the church was set up, and had a representative being in him; therefore when God the Father viewed Christ, he saw also the whole church in him, and that, with complacency and delight, all over glorious, never viewed, and never to be viewed apart from him. For “is Christ divided?” No: — He and his church, being Husband, and bride, are no more twain, but one. He is Head, and they who believe are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.” Matt. xix. 6. — Ephes, v. 30. Oh! how

blessed, when under the teaching of God the Holy Ghost, we are led to view things thus; and look to Christ for acceptance, where God the Father, everlastingly looked, for “he hath made us accepted in the beloved;” to look to him for life, in whom is treasured up the fountain of life; to look to him for everlasting salvation, on whom Jehovah hath rested, the glory of all divine perfections. — Why, Sirs! it is a truth, the knowledge of which, I would not be without, for ten thousand worlds, (because there can be no “quietness and assurance” of soul, no solid happiness without it,) that if a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ it is very certain, that electing love placed me in the *hands* of Christ, before I was in the *loins* of Adam. Nay more, I was held up, preserved by him, and fell not from the love of God, even when falling in Adam’s transgression. I say, since I, and since you, are made partakers of the divine nature, we have decided evidence of this — the regeneration, and faith of God’s people, being fruits of predestinating favour; hence it is said, “as many as were ordained to eternal life, *believed.*” Acts xiii. 48. And Peter addressing his Epistle “to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, &c.” who were “pilgrims and sojourners upon the earth,” styles them, “elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.”

II. — Observe *it is called the book of life, as it includes, and determines the existence of God’s people in natural life.* It does appear to me, that there is a distinction to be made between the animal life of God’s people, and that of the ungodly, who live without God in the world, and die without God, when they go out of the world. For when God the Father, promised, “that he (Christ) should see his seed;” he not only gave the promise with regard to eternal, existence with him upon his throne in glory, (at least so I understand it,) but that he should see them all exist in natural life, therefore as this is a covenant promise made to Christ, to, and in whom, all promises were made; the book of life, which is the covenant register of the whole family of God, must include the literal and actual being, of God’s people upon the earth. The very dust of God’s people, is

precious in his sight, and they are body, and soul, for time, and eternity included in the covenant. And is it not with reference to this natural life and earthly existence, that Moses speaks, when entreating the Lord on behalf of the idolatrous Israelites whom he had threatened to consume, and then promised to make of Moses a great nation? Moses prays that God would preserve his people, and bring them into the promised land, urging the honour of Jehovah's name, by declaring that "the Egyptians would then say, that for mischief did he bring them out to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth." Therefore in supplicating the Lord's forgiveness Moses adds, "yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin; and if not, blot me I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written," Exodus, xxxii. 32. As if he had said, rather make an end of my mortal existence upon the earth, for I cannot accept the condition of preserving my life, and making a great nation of me, to the utter destruction of Israel, for then thine honour would lie bleeding upon the ground, which would be to me, altogether insupportable. It would not be at all consistent with the principles, either of nature or grace, to suppose that Moses could possibly desire to be blotted out of God's book as regarded his interest in everlasting life. It is not consistent with the principles of nature to desire everlasting condemnation, though man by nature has no real desire after everlasting glory in the presence of God; for even the ungodly, who never wish to be delivered from their sins, would very gladly be delivered from the wages, and escape the fearful judgment, and fiery indignation of the Lord. Hence we find even Cain, though he never complained of the burden of his sin, yet cried out, that his punishment was "greater than he could bear." Neither is it agreeable with the principles of grace to suppose that Moses wished to be excluded from the heavenly glory, and separated from Christ for the sake of Israel, for this would be, to make his love for the Israelites, greater than his love to Christ, of whom he wrote, and who must have been the supreme object of his affections, whose presence and likeness, was by him, doubtless, esteemed more desirable, and far better, than all things else. He had *before* esteemed the reproach of Christ greater

riches, than all the treasures of Egypt, and therefore cannot *now* be supposed, (though he loved them much) to have loved Jacob's posterity more than Christ.

Thus God's book of life contains the natural life of his people, secures *where, when,* and in what circumstances they shall come into the world, with every incident of their lives. What deep humiliation ought the consideration of these things, to awaken in our minds, together with gratitude of heart, that worms of the earth, the rebellious sons and daughters of Adam, should have been taken so much notice of, and remembered with mercy in their low estate. But the subject rises higher, and therefore,

III. — We observe that *it is called the book of life, as it includes and secures the life of grace.* Therefore it is said "whom he did predestinate, them he also called." Predestination secures divine calling, and divine calling is connected with eternal glorification, regeneration being the believer's first step towards it. The life of grace then begun, is in virtue of the record of the book of life, in which Jehovah wrote down the exact appointed time when life from Christ the Head, should be given *to,* and received *by* the members of his mystical body, and vital oneness realized; so that there is no uncertainty about the matter. The appointment is the Lord's, the whole efficiency is of the Lord, and the glory is, and shall be his also. And this forms the great encouragement for the faithful ambassadors of Christ, to go forward, "declaring the testimony of God," and setting forth the riches of that grace, which framed the book of life, and while doing this they are warranted to look for those effects of grace which are produced, when the Lord goeth forth, "working with them and confirming the word with signs following;" — such as raising the dead to life — giving sight to the blind, who sat in darkness; — and ears to the deaf that they might "listen to the voice of the charmer." They who are thus made new creatures in Christ Jesus, and begin to live spiritually, in virtue of the faithful record of "the book of life," are at the same time *killed.* Omnipotent grace *kills* them to dependence upon the law for

acceptance with God, they feel they have broken the covenant of works, and can never repair the breach; it *kills* them to the love and dominion of sin; it *kills* them to confidence in the flesh; and it *kills* them to conformity to the world, for out of it they are brought as from among the dead. — It is the characteristic mark of unregeneracy, for sinners to be looking for life from that, which is the “ministration of death,” and it is with every one, when made a partaker of the divine nature as it was with Paul, who having been quickened to newness of life, says, “I was alive without the law once, (that is, he thought himself healthful, sound, and whole, knew not that he was diseased with sin, full of wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores; yea, dead in trespasses and sins) but when the commandment came,” (that is home to his heart and conscience, by the power of the Holy Ghost,) “sin revived and I died.” He who had “lived a pharisee of the pharisees,” a thorough perfectionist, without sin as he supposed, now found the old man of sin reviving, as one aroused with fear of being put down from the throne, showing himself in his true colours, as “exceeding sinful,” a very monster, hideous, and hateful; then saith he “the commandment which was ordained unto life, I found to be unto death;” for as sin had brought death, he was now convicted that he was worthy of eternal death, wherefore he died to all those false hopes, and expectations of eternal life, which he had cherished; finding that if under the law, he was under the curse, and its curse, everlasting punishment and banishment from the presence of the Lord. — In the performance of this miracle of grace too, the man becomes “dead to sin and he cannot live any longer therein;” sin lives in him, (the *entire* old man of sin; not, the remains of sin, as some would tell us,) and this wars in his members, while grace having taken the throne, fights from off the throne and exercises dominion. Sin cannot have dominion over such a man, for he is not under the law, but under grace; he hates sin with perfect hatred, loathes himself as a sinner, and “crucifies the flesh with the affections and lusts.” Then as he feels the awful depravity and wretchedness of his own evil heart, he dies to all “confidence in the flesh;” he finds the freedom of his will, of which

he so much boasted before, has been a freedom only to commit sin, he is conscious of the truth of that declaration of God's most holy word, "he that trusteth in his own heart is a fool," (Prov. xxviii. 26.) and he dies daily to self, and carnal reason: Yes, and he dies to conformity to the world, he was fast held before by worldly greatness, worldly wisdom, worldly pleasures, worldly honours, worldly opinions, and worldly maxims; but behold! they are separated from him, and he from them; he is crucified to the world, and the world is crucified to him, and his desire is to be found maintaining the character of those, who decidedly come under the declaration of the Lord Christ himself, who said, "they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world," John, xvii. 16.; thereby identifying them with himself in their separation from the world. In short those made alive, and living a life of grace, have been "delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son." They live a life of justification *before* God, a life of sanctification and devotedness to God, a life of communion with God, yea and a life of *dependence upon God*, deriving all *their supplies from* him.

They discover that by nature, as children of the first Adam, they were under the curse and condemnation of the law, "children of wrath even as others;" and that at the time when they were "alive without the law," that is, esteemed themselves alive, and in a fair way for heaven, being without any knowledge of the exceeding breadth, and spirituality of the law, that at that time they were in reality "without Christ, without hope, and without God in the world;" that though they looked upon themselves, as very righteous, and good, they were in fact, in their sins and in their blood, the sentence of the law, though not executed, hanging over them, and they adjudged to death, and in the sight of the law looked upon as dead. Now justification of life is the very opposite of this, according to the language of the Holy Ghost by Paul, Rom. v. 18. "Therefore as by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation, even so by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men to justification of life." And when the faith of God's people is drawn out into exercise, and the

“righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith,” so that the eye of faith can take in the completeness of the church in Christ, the apostle’s injunction is regarded with deep interest, and lively joy “likewise reckon ye yourselves (in consequence of union with Christ,) to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Rom. vi. 11. For they are enabled to believe that they are in the sight of God, as standing in Christ — acquitted, and discharged from sin, that sin is not imputed to them, but that it has been lifted up by Jehovah the Father, and charged upon Christ, whose righteousness is imputed, and reckoned theirs. So that as children of the Lord, the second Adam, we stand before God acquitted, cleared from sin, and enrobed in garments spotless, clean, and white: and the life of justification is realized and enjoyed by us, as we experience the blessedness of our standing thus before God in Christ, as justified freely by his grace. The complete blessedness of a justified state is not felt until the Holy Ghost leads the soul up to the *eternity* of justification as an immanent act conceived and passed, in the divine mind, upon the footing of the Father’s acceptance of Christ’s bond of covenant engagements, which had in it all the virtue of his actual performance of the work of righteousness, and “reconciliation for iniquity;” hence it is said, “God *was* in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.” 2 Cor. v. 19.

The believer in Jesus, who in spiritual contemplation is led by faith to view covenant transactions, the eternal union of the Church with Christ, and his ancient undertakings on her behalf; by virtue of which, Jehovah could consistently *justify* his elect, has tenfold greater happiness than he who dishonours God, by limiting such justification to the circumstances of time. True, indeed, this “spiritual blessing” is not known and lived upon, until it is pronounced in the conscience by the Holy Ghost; but yet when extensively taught of God, we recognize it as having existed long before, and “rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory,” that as chosen in Christ, that as our life is bound up with his, that as we are members of his body, parts of him who presented himself as our sin bearer as early

as sin presented itself before God; we never could have stood in an *unjustified* state before him. It may sound extravagant in the ears of some, to assert so much, but if the two headships are kept closely in view, and the fact of our having a being in Christ, before we had in Adam, and the impossibility of the union with Christ ever being dissolved, are understood, this blessed truth must be acknowledged, and no mistake will be made. Indeed, the more we are enabled to look at our completeness in Christ the second Adam; the lower in humility, and deeper in self-abasement, shall we lie under a consciousness of our degradation, misery, and condemnation in the first Adam. — But the life of grace too, which the book of life secures, is a life of sanctification and devotedness *to* God. This is begun in regeneration, is maintained and made increasingly manifest by constant communications of grace from the fulness of Christ. We are made partakers of the divine nature in regeneration, by which we are actually separated from the world for holy purposes and uses, that Christ may dwell in us and walk in us, in which indwelling of his, consists the very essence and life of sanctification. Now the divine nature of which we are partakers, never does, and never can become more *holy*, for it is already perfect in its nature, (as an infant when just born, is a man in miniature,) and as holy as God is holy; but it is made stronger and more vigorous, grows in stature till we are “perfect men,” and arrive at “the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.” And this “increasing with the increase of God,” is evidenced in the drawing forth of the graces of the Holy Spirit into act and exercise upon the person, righteousness, blood, and intercession of Christ; for the effecting of which, grace was given to Christ, on our behalf before the foundation of the world, and hence it is said, “unto every one of us, is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.” Eph. iv. 7. — This life of grace is also a life of communion and fellowship with each person in the glorious Trinity. Having a holy nature, and principles demonstrating vital oneness with Christ, we are indulged with that communion, which is the fruit of union; and being familiar with our justification, and possessing a capacity to receive spiritual enjoyments, “we have

peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God,” Rom. v. 1, 2. Then as “we have through Christ, access by one Spirit unto the Father,” Ephes, ii. 18, we receive sweet assurances of the Father’s everlasting love, such as “*I have loved thee* with an everlasting love: therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee,” Jer. xxxi. 3. we prove the power of the blood of Christ to cleanse from sin, and remove guilt from the conscience, and the sufficiency of the Spirit’s grace in supporting, when the heart is pained with “a thorn in the flesh,” and a messenger from satan buffets us. And rejoicing that “God hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad” before him; we are enabled to make reciprocal returns of love; Jehovah speaks to the heart, and says, “since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee.” And we, amazed at the infinite greatness of Jehovah’s love, unbosom our souls; and tell him, “we love him because he first loved us,” and again “we love the Lord because he hath heard our voice, and our supplication.” John, iv. 19. Psalm, cxvi. 1. The Lord too whispers in the spiritual ear of his people, “Let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice, for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance, is comely,” Cant. ii. 14. — And the soul replies again, “the companions hearken to thy voice, cause me to hear it,” Cant. viii. 13; or “make thy face to shine upon me,” “show me thy glory,” a “token for good,” or “speak peace unto thy servant,” and say “unto my soul, I am thy salvation.” Thus living in communion with God, we are enabled to live upon God, trusting his faithfulness, expecting his presence and constant grace. And then as we receive blessings *from* God, in the way of earnest prayer, we are taught to live *to* God, and breathe back again to him, everything in praise and thanksgiving. The language of such a soul is not unlike that of the poet.

“Why this profusion of thy grace,
To such a worm as I:
Father, I ask in fix’d amaze,
Explain the mystery!”

IV. — We observe that *this book is called the book of life, as it includes, and secures the saints' life of glory beyond time.*

The eternal happiness of the saints in the immediate presence of God. This is a free grace covenant gift, and therefore must be included in this covenant book. It exceeds the happiness which Adam possessed in his Paradi-
saical estate, and lost by transgression, as much as the light of the sun exceeds that of a taper. Man's obedience to the law could not obtain it, for it was not to come as a gift of the law, but by grace, see Gal. iii. 21, 22.

This life is the continuance, and consummation of that of which I have just been speaking; for glory is begun upon earth in communion and fellowship with God.

“The men of grace have found,
Glory begun below.”

And so it is, for wherever the presence of Christ is enjoyed, heaven is realized. But after all, our enjoyments *here*, are but as a drop to the ocean. “We see through a glass darkly,” and Christ the beloved of our souls, showeth himself through the lattices of ordinances. We get a taste of the streams, which make glad the city of God; but what are these, in comparison with the boundless, and fathomless “river of water of life, clear as crystal proceeding out of the throne of God and the Lamb.” Rev. xxii. 1. The foretastes are sweet, yea very sweet; and indeed are as much as we can possibly bear in this time state, for as one observes, “a single *drop* of glory, fills the earthen vessel up to the very brim.” And if things be thus, with you and me, my hearer, to what height may not our anticipations be raised? Immeasurably high! until lost in thought and wonder; for as Top-lady says,

“If *such* the sweetness of the streams,
What *must* the fountain be;
Where Saints and Angels draw their bliss,
Immediately from thee”

My hearers, it cannot be described; we just taste it here, and it embitters everything that is opposed and contrary to it. This we know however; it will chiefly lie in uninterrupted communion with God, and the full revelation of the glories of Christ, in being “made like him, and seeing him as he is.” Thus the book of life contains the REGISTER of all who are appointed to be the living in the Jerusalem of peace above; it is *chained to the throne* on which the Lamb sits; and he who sits upon the throne holds *all who were given to him, and written in the book, in his own hand*; with his own hand gives eternal life, and now proclaims, to the dispersion of the groundless fears of his timid sheep, and to the disappointment of all enemies, that “they shall never perish, nor shall any pluck them out of his hands;” which will be finally demonstrated in the day of his coming to judgment, when he who is our great “Michael shall stand up;” having risen from his seat, to receive his church, as he did Stephen, and then every one composing that church, and written in the book, shall be delivered from the existence of sin, from death and the grave, and introduced into the joy of the Lord.

We come now,

Secondly — To enquire what is denoted by the writing of the book of life.

What! say some, will you presume to speak of the *writing* of the book of life? Can you possibly search the records — are they not secret things, which belong to God alone? Do not be alarmed my hearer; I will only speak of the writing of *that* book, so far as it is transcribed into *this* book, (the scriptures) we need not wish to search the records of the book of life, for there is a very extensive revelation made here, therefore they are no

secrets to him who has the seeing eye, and the understanding heart. They are revealed and consequently belong to us and to our children. Hold fast the whole truth then; buy it, and sell it not, “for all scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable.” And if there had been any part which should be kept back, or only sparingly introduced into the pulpit, God would have told us. — But on the contrary Jesus says “whosoever shall be ashamed of me and my words, (any of them) in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.” And existing facts around us fully prove that Jehovah lightly esteems those who despise him; and refuses to give his sanction to that ministry which honours not the glorious persons in the Trinity in their acts of grace, and sets not forth the distinct parts which each takes in the economy of grace. — But to return. That which is implied in the text, is in other places, positively stated; viz. that the writing of the book of life is a writing of names; which denotes,

I. — That *election is personal and particular*. The writing is of God himself, made by his eternal and immutable decree. As Paul saith to Timothy, “the Lord knoweth them that are his,” which proves that particular persons are the objects of electing love.

This election is not some general and indiscriminate decree of God, about saving “any or everybody, who may happen to become very religious and pious, and then prove faithful, and persevere in their faith and piety to the end of life;” but it is a particular designation, and unalterable appointment of particular persons, certain individuals as heirs of the kingdom of glory, and who shall infallibly obtain everlasting salvation. It would be unworthy the character of Jehovah, not Godlike, but perfectly inconsistent with his perfections, that to him should be ascribed, general and indeterminate decrees, depending too upon some certain conditions to be performed by, and determinations found in man to render them effective. We read in scripture of “God’s determinate counsel and foreknowledge;” but never

of a general, indeterminate, and contingent decree. — Neither is it ever said in scripture, that persons *so*, and *so qualified* are chosen of God; but election is always set forth as Jehovah's simple act passed before all time, fixing upon the objects of love without the least respect to any loveliness in them, anything to be done in them, or by them; their goodness was no motive, and their badness was no hinderance for it is said "the children not being yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God, according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth." Rom. ix. 11. And indeed so far from the faith and good works of God's people being conditions and qualifications for election, they are amongst the things which they are chosen to, the very fruits and evidences of it; then it is manifest that we are not elected *because* we have faith, and perform good works, but we have faith and perform good works, *because* we were elected. — Indeed nothing out of God could possibly move him to set his love upon us, for if it could, then Jehovah would cease to be an independent Being: into such awful consequences, does the Arminian scheme lead men, and hence arises the ridicule of infidels, the number of whom it has multiplied by thousands. The text itself marks a line of distinction between those written in the book, and those *not* written; evidently showing what we are contending for, viz. that election is of particular persons; and if it were not so, there would be no foundation for hope, or source of rejoicing, and it is amazing to me how persons professing godliness, and yet rejecting, so soul animating a doctrine can get any comfort and happiness whatever; if they have any rejoicing at all, I am bold to say, it is not worth having, for if there had been no election, there had been no Christ Jesus; if there had been no Christ Jesus, there had been no redemption; if no redemption, no salvation; and if no salvation, no glorification; then all had perished. But Christ points his disciples to the true source of joy; "rejoice not, saith he, that the devils are subject to you, but rather rejoice that *your names* are written in heaven." Here Christ positively assures us of the writing of particular persons, and that by name: — That which Paul asserts also, is exactly in point for he expressly declares

of Clement and his other fellow labourers, that their names *were in the book of life*. Luke, x. 20. — Phil. iv. 3. Now surely Arminianism itself with all its impudence, dares not put on so bold a front as to wrest these declarations, to some general decree depending upon creature conditions.

The writing of names in the book of life may be a similitude which has some reference to the genealogical catalogue which was kept among the Jews, particularly the register of the priesthood. At all events that will serve in some degree to illustrate our subject. We find it related in the second chapter of Ezra, 61, and 62, verses, that when the captives returned from Babylon, “the posterity of Habaia, Koz, and Barzillai, were not able to prove their descent by genealogical writings, and consequently they were put from the priesthood and not allowed to minister at the altar or partake of any of the privileges of the priests.” Now when the year of jubilee is fully come, when the ransomed of the Lord shall all be called home to the possession of their eternal inheritance; none will be admitted but those who carry the certificate of their ancient register in their own bosoms, and so are *proved* to belong to the royal family of heaven, who being “a kingdom of priests, yea, a holy nation, a peculiar people, a royal priesthood,” are written in heaven, and receive heaven, because written there. Election is a blessing that lies at the foundation of all others, it is the first link in the golden chain of salvation, and the rule by which all other blessings are dispensed, therefore Paul says, “we were blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, according as he (the Father) hath chosen us in him, before the foundation of the world.” — We remark again,

II. — That this writing of names denotes *the exact account God has of his own*. He wrote down the exact number in his book and delivered them all by name to his Son’s care in the eternity past, and he will reckon up the number at the last day, when the Son delivers up the account of them to

the Father, and “it shall be recorded of this and that man, that he was born in Zion.”

It is said “the Lord knoweth them that are his,” and Jesus himself, says, to his disciples, “I know whom I have chosen;” thus in their being exactly known, is set forth the exceeding greatness of Jehovah’s love to them; how very precious they are in his sight, and what value he has set upon them; they are so valued and secured by Jehovah, that he has not only registered them in the book of life, but has sealed them for himself, and declared that “they shall see his face, and his name be in their foreheads.” Well, and being marked for himself, he knows where to find them, in their unregenerate state, and himself seeks them out, for says he “I both search my sheep and seek them out,” Ezekiel xxxiv. 11. And such is his knowledge of them, that he will know where to find their sleeping dust, at the last great day.

Now let me ask my hearers, what they think of the matter for themselves? Is the number so fully known to God, and are you not concerned to know whether you are included in the number. Methinks I hear some say, “*who* hath perused the volume of the book, or looked into the secret purposes of God, that this should be known?” — My hearer it is to be known; for Paul addresses the church of God, and says, “*knowing* brethren, beloved your election of God.” 1 Thes. i. 4. And in the same way that they attained to a knowledge of their election, do we attain to it.

The Lord has given us two books, which, by comparing one with the other, we may arrive at a satisfactory conclusion upon the subject. They are, the book of scripture and the book of conscience. In the book of scripture, divine calling, genuine faith, absolute hatred of sin, and a principle of holiness within, are set forth as evidences. Now, does the book of conscience agree with this? — Has the gospel ever come home to your hearts with power? Are you “called out of darkness, into marvellous light?” Have you

ever been called up from the world and earthly things to the fellowship of Christ? Are you taught to “loathe and abhor yourselves,” hate iniquity, and depart from it?” Has the prayer of faith, and the hand of faith, ever been put forth towards Christ, and can you say with the church of old, “saw ye him, whom my soul loveth?” Now these are simple, but infallible evidences, which if conscience bears testimony to, verily you are “chosen of God, and precious.” Your doubts are no proofs of non-election, but this is not spoken in commendation of your doubts, which are dishonourable to God, and destructive of your own soul’s peace. “Know then that God hath set apart him that is godly for himself.”

III. The writing of names also *denotes the immutability of election*. Immutability belongs to every decree of God: the Lord hath purposed, and who shall disannul it, for saith he, “my counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.” Isaiah, xiv. 27. xlv. 10. And the apostle saith “who hath resisted his will?” His will cannot be resisted, it is unmoved by any power, and that on which it fixes, and determines, must continue the same. Even a heathen philosopher could say “to be changeable, and repent is unworthy, not only of God, but even of an honest man.” — The scriptures declare that “he is not a man that he should lie, or the son of man that he should repent;” they speak of “the purpose of God according to election, as that which *shall stand*.” And when Zion had made that sad mistake, and drawn such a dishonourable conclusion of the character of her God, as to say that “God had forsaken her, and her God had forgotten her;” then the Lord himself replied, “can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion upon the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me.” Isaiah, xlix. 14, 15, 16. And the Lord Jesus saith, “him that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment, and I will *not* blot out his name out of the book of life.” Rev. iii. 5. And shall we suppose it possible that he ever will? Can he prove unfaithful and deny himself? Do worms of the earth proudly seek

to maintain their purposes? And will the great Jehovah alter his mind, or allow his designs to be frustrated? It cannot be. Shall Pilate say, “what I have written I have written;” and shall not our God much more maintain his decrees, which were all framed in infinite wisdom, and are supported by almighty powers — “I am the Lord (saith he) I change not, therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.” Mai. iii. 6. Here I shall notice one or two passages which the adversaries of truth have endeavoured to twist to the God dishonouring purpose of making it appear, that he can “cast off his people whom he foreknew;” notwithstanding he has positively declared he “*will not.*”

There is a very remarkable passage in the lxxix. Psalm, and the 28th verse, which, when viewed in its connection, is very far from being contradictory of the position I am maintaining. You are to observe of whom this is spoken, and by whom. Jesus himself is the speaker, who by the mouth of David the prophet is describing his dolorous sufferings, and setting forth the cruel treatment which he should receive from the Jews at the time of his “giving himself an offering without spot to God.” Wherefore because they were obstinate despisers of the Lord’s anointed: Christ himself denounceth this curse, and saith “let them be blotted out of the book of the living, and not be written with the righteous:” that is, let them become nationally extinct, and die a political death; which has been awfully fulfilled, and is now manifest, in consequence of their “killing the Prince of Life.” The judgments of God have fallen upon their nation, and as was foretold, their country is left desolate, they are scattered among all nations, their temple is laid on heaps; and it is computed that in their last wars with the Romans, not less than twelve hundred and thirty thousand were cut off within seven years. In all this there appears quite sufficient to answer to the tremendous imprecation. But if it still be contended, that by “the book of the living,” eternal life is intended: I would say, even admitting so much, then the language cannot intend a real blotting out; but rather is a declaration that they were not written; for to say, “let them not be written

with the righteous,” is equivalent to saying, “let them be blotted out; and thus the latter part of the verse is explanatory of the former.

The 19th verse of the xxii. chapter, of Revelation, “if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away, his part out of the book of life;” is sometimes brought forward with the view to show (what is impossible,) that an interest in eternal election may be lost. This is to be explained not of God’s depriving any of an interest in covenant favour and blessing once given; but of taking away that which men only seemed to have; according to the presumptuous conclusion they themselves drew of their own state; as for instance, the Jews who boasted that they had “Abraham to their father:” but their descent from Abraham, and external privileges, were empty things to speak of, when not among Christ’s sheep. Take the language of Jesus; “whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance; but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that which he seemeth to have.” Luke, viii. 18.

Thirdly. Notice to whom the book belongs.

“The book of life *of the lamb*,” who is called the lamb for his meekness, harmlessness, patience, and because he was set apart as a sacrifice, and typified by the lambs under the old testament dispensation, and the book is said to be his.

I. *Because he was present at the making of it, and was concerned in the purpose.* Indeed, election was as much his act as the Father’s: therefore saith he “I know whom I have chosen.” John xiii. 18.

Christ engaged in common with the Father and the Holy Ghost, in putting down the names of his elect; and he himself tells us that from the beginning his delights were with the sons of men. Here how ancient and how

great does the love of Jesus to his church appear! for although he knew what would be the state of degradation and misery into which his people would sink; and the exceeding great sum which must by himself be paid in order to ransom them from their state of thralldom, yet his love maintained its hold, and in writing their names in the book of life, wrote his own as the Lamb “fore-ordained,” and appointed for sacrifice. Well might Paul’s earnest desire for the church be that they “might be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, and be filled with all the fulness of God.” Ephes, iii. 18, 19. But we must not enlarge, as we have gone so far into the former parts of the subject, and therefore let us observe,

II. — That the book of life is said to be the book of the Lamb, *because he is the first elect and takes up as it were the first page of the book*. Christ is the Head, and was set up as the pattern of the Church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all. Paul says, “the head of the woman, is the man, and the head of the man is Christ.” And again “the man was not of the woman, but the woman of the man: Nevertheless neither is the man without the woman, nor the woman without the man.” So may I say Christ was not of the church, but the church is of Christ; nevertheless Christ is not without the church, neither is the church without Christ her Head. For as when the woman was made of the man, she was brought forth and presented to Adam, and they became no more twain, but one, in marriage relationship; so when the church was chosen in Christ, she was brought forth to Christ, and presented in marriage relationship as one with him for ever; and as he was heir of all things, all things became hers, which yet were to be purchased for her, by his blood, as the Lamb of God. Paul, under the guidance of the Holy Ghost, sums up this, in a very beautiful manner, “all things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours,

for ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." That is, ye are Christ's bride, and Christ is God's anointed, and first elect, 1 Cor. iii. 21 — 23.

Fourthly. — Just observe what is said of Christ the Lamb, that he was slain from the foundation of the world.

I. — He was slain from the foundation of the world, that is, *from everlasting in the purpose and decree of God*. He was foreordained before the world began, sanctified, set apart as the sacrifice and propitiation for sin. The old divines used to say, "that God's decree securing a certain futurity of events, is the reason why things future, may be considered as already existing;" and indeed without this, there must be a sad chasm, which would render the whole scheme of grace abortive, and prove fatal to God's designs. But the mischief among men is, that they measure the great Jehovah by themselves, notwithstanding he has declared, "that with him a thousand years, are as one day;" which justifies the statement, "that past, present and future are with him but one eternal *now*."

Christ did nothing in the days of his flesh, but for which he received a command from the Father, and in the counsel of peace bound himself to perform; which bond was accepted of the Father, as though it were actual payment, and hence the Lamb was looked upon as slain from the foundation of the world. Now if I am asked why I have preached so much about God's decrees today, and am told that it would be better to leave them, and preach the cross of Christ instead: I shall answer, that in doing the one, I have not left the other undone, and that I find it impossible to preach the cross of Christ fully, detached from God's decrees; because I find Peter who preached it fully, and boldly, declaring it thus, "him (Christ) being delivered by the *determinate counsel and foreknowledge* of God ye have taken; and by wicked hands have crucified and slain?" The book of life then is sprinkled with Christ's blood; it recorded every drop which was to

be shed, and hence it is the book of life of the Lamb slain, from the foundation of the world.

II. — We observe Christ may be called the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, in a lower sense, inasmuch as the phrase, “from the foundation of the world,” *sometimes intends the first age of the world — the remotest antiquity of the world*, as in that passage, Luke, xi. 50. And then it may mean, slain in promise, in type, and in the persons of the mystical members of Christ’s body. A promise was given in the garden, when also it appears sacrifices were instituted by God himself; and soon after Abel was slain by Cain, who went to heaven in virtue of the blood of the Lamb.

Each of these particulars might be amplified, but time will not now admit of it, therefore they must be left for your meditation. The best evidence of interest in the book of life of the Lamb, is realized when the blood of the Lamb is sprinkled upon the conscience affording the peace of the gospel. — That decided evidence may be possessed by you as to your election of God and identity of interest with the Lamb, shall be my earnest prayer to God on your behalf. — Amen, and Amen.
