

# Samuel Reece

## Sovereign Reign of Grace

Introduction - The knowledge of God and of his Son Jesus Christ is said to be life eternal. This knowledge is the gift of God, and whatever he gratuitously communicates does not essentially belong to any of its recipients, being a gift from above; the vigor with which it operates is always in proportion to the degree of its communication; hence we can easily account for the manifest disproportion there exists between the attainments of believers in the acquisition of knowledge; "there are diversities of gifts, but the communication of them is by the same Spirit, {I Cor.12:4,} and the end proposed is the spiritual advantage and the increasing profit of the mind, the Spirit of God being the Spirit of Truth, can never be supposed to teach different men different systems as true that are wholly subversive of each other. Men have ever {whatever system they have adopted} found it advantageous to father all their errors upon God, forgetting, however, that it is as impossible for God to contradict himself in his Word, as it is for Him to disgrace himself in his Works. Hence I conclude that as the Spirit of God applies that system, whatever it may be, which is founded in infinite wisdom, He can apply but that one system, as the idea of infinite wisdom eternally precludes the idea of a second choice, as the first effort must be the best. To know what that system is, we must have recourse to the Divine Testimony, and there we find, that Christ is said to be "our life," to "have life in Himself," that he is come into the world to seek and to save that which was lost; and this conduct is not imputed to the compassionate feelings of the moment, when our misery gained its dreadful ascendancy over the mind, but the ordered result of an Eternal Council; the necessary consequence of a Covenanted Agreement, preparatory to the execution of which, all things were made for Him and by Him. In this light our author considered the subject, and although neither he nor any other adopting the same principles, can boast of an host on their side; yet, they have that to boast of, which is of infinitely greater consequence, for the hosts we see are formed by human interest and human wisdom, but with us is the eternal God. We have his Word, and where his Name is recorded, there will he be to bless it. We have to this day the protecting hand of God visibly with us, for notwithstanding the clamorous opposition of priests and their hirelings, we have continued to the present moment; and as the interest of God and the interest of Truth are one and the same, God can never desert the one without trampling under his feet the glory of his Name and the dignity of his Crown. {End of Introduction}

Sovereign Reign of Grace: God's will is nothing else than God himself willing, consequently it is Omnipotent and Unfrustrable; hence we find it termed by Austin and the schoolmen 'voluptas omnipotentissima' {all powerful pleasure} because, whatever God wills cannot fail of being effected. This made Austin say, "Evil men do many things contrary to the revealed will of God, but so great in his wisdom, that he directs all things into those channels which he foreknew." And again, "No free will of the creature can resist the will of God, for man cannot so will or nil, as to obstruct the Divine Determination, or overcome the Divine Power." Once more, "it cannot be questioned, but God does all things and ever did, according to his own purpose; the human will cannot resist him, so as to make him do more or less than it is his pleasure to do, since he does what he pleases with the wills of men."

Whatever comes to pass, comes to pass by virtue of this Absolute, Omnipotent will of God, which is the primary and supreme cause of all things. "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power; for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created." {Rev.4:11} "He doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?" {Dan.4:35} "Whatsoever the LORD pleased, that did he in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places." {Ps.135:6} "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing, and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father." {Mt.10:29} To all which Austin subscribes, when he says, "Nothing is done, but what the Almighty wills should be done," as does Luther, whose words are these; "this therefore must stand; namely, the unsearchable will of God, without which nothing exists or acts." God would not be such if he was not Almighty, and if anything could be done without him. And elsewhere he quotes these words of Erasmus; "supposing there was an earthly prince who could do whatever he would, and none were able to resist him; we might safely say of such an one, that he would certainly fulfill his own desire; in like manner the will of God, which is the first cause of all things, should seem to lay a kind of necessity upon our wills." The will of God is so the cause of all things, as to be itself without cause, for nothing can be the cause of that which is the cause of everything. So that the Divine will is the ultimate standard of all our enquiries, for when we ascend to that we can go no farther. Hence we find every matter resolved ultimately into the mere sovereign pleasure of God, as the spring and occasion of whatsoever is done in heaven and earth. "At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." {Mt.11:25} "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." {Lk.12:32} "I will; be thou clean." {Mt.8:3} "And he goeth up into a mountain, and calleth unto him whom he would; and they came unto him." {Mk.3:13} "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth." {Js.1:18} "Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." {Jn.1:13} "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy." {Rom.9:15,16} And no wonder that the will of God should be the main spring that sets all inferior wheels in motion, and should likewise be the rule by which he goes in all his dealings with his creatures. Since nothing out of God; that is, exterior to himself, can possibly induce him to will or nil one thing rather than another; deny this, and you at one stroke destroy his Immutability and Independency. Luther, says, "God is a Being, whose will acknowledges no cause, neither is it for us to prescribe rules for his sovereign pleasure, or call him to an account for what he does; he has neither superior nor equal, and his will is the rule of all things; he did not therefore will such and such things because they were in themselves right, and he was bound to will them, but they are therefore equitable and right because he wills them. The will of man indeed, may be influenced and moved, but God's will never can to assert the contrary is to undefine him." We should therefore be careful not to give up the Omnipotence of God, under a pretense of exalting his holiness; for he is infinite in both, therefore neither should be set aside or obscured. To say that God absolutely nills the being and commission of sin, while experience convinces us that sin is committed everyday is to represent the Deity as a weak, impotent being, who would fain have things go otherwise than they do, but cannot accomplish his desire; on the other hand, to say that he willeth sin, doth not in the least

detract from the holiness and rectitude of his nature; because, whatever God wills, as well as whatever he does, cannot be eventually evil; materially evil it may be; but, as was just said, it must ultimately be directed to some wise and just end, otherwise he could not will it, for his will is righteous and good, and the sole rule of right and wrong, &c. As God knows nothing now which he did not know from all eternity, so he wills nothing now which he did not will from everlasting. Furthermore, the absolute will of God is the original spring and efficient cause of his people's salvation. I say the original and efficient; for, sensu complexus {sense of the complex} there are other intermediate causes of their salvation, which however all result from, and are subservient to, this primary one, the will of God. Such are his everlasting choice of them to eternal life, the eternal Covenant of Grace entered into by the Trinity, in behalf of the elect, &c. Since this absolute will of God is both immutable and omnipotent, we infer, that the salvation of every one of the elect it most infallibly certain, and can by no means be prevented, &c. God is essentially unchangeable in himself, were he otherwise he would be confessedly imperfect; since whatever changes must change for the better or for the worse; whatever alteration anything undergoes, that being must, ipso facto, either become more excellent than it was, or lose some of the excellency which it had, but neither of these can be the case with the Deity, he cannot change for the better, for that would necessarily imply, that he was not perfectly good before; he cannot change for the worse, for then he could not be perfectly good after that change. Therefore God is unchangeable, and this is the uniform voice of scripture: "For I am the LORD, I change not." {Mal.3:6} "With whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." {Js.1:17} "But thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end." {Ps.102:27} "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever." {Heb.13:8} God is likewise absolutely unchangeable with regard to his purposes and promises: "God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent; hath he said, and shall he not do it; or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?" {Num.23:19} "The Strength of Israel will not lie nor repent; for he is not a man that he should repent." {I Sam.15:29} "I the LORD have spoken it; it shall come to pass, and I will do it; I will not go back, neither will I spare, neither will I repent." {Ez.24:14} "For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance." {Rom.11:29} "He abideth faithful; he cannot deny himself." {II Tim.2:13} The decrees of God are not only immutable as to himself, it being inconsistent with his nature to alter in his purposes, or change his mind, but that they are immutable likewise with respect to the objects of those decrees; so that, whatsoever God hath determined, concerning every individual person or thing, shall surely and infallibly be accomplished in and upon them. Hence we find that he actually sheweth mercy on whom he hath decreed to show mercy, and hardeneth whom he resolved to harden. {Rom.9:18} "Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure." {Is.46:10} Consequently his Eternal Predestination of men and things must be immutable as Himself, and so far from being reversible, can never admit of the least variation. The Apostle says, who may resist the will of God? {Rom.9:19} By the word 'will' Paul gives us to understand, that God actually willeth those very things unto which men are hardened by him. When Paul adds, who may resist; he in fact points out the necessity, which they whom God hardens, are under of doing those things. When God would harden Pharaoh, in order that he might not obey the commandment; it was the actual will of God that Pharaoh should not obey. Yea, God himself wrought in Pharaoh to oppose the commandment sent him. Pharaoh therefore did in reality that what God willed

him to do; yea, he did no more than what God himself had wrought in him to do; nor was it in Pharaoh's power to act otherwise than he did. You will conclude that these are hard sayings; "nay, but O man, who art thou that repliest against God?" {9:20} Paul does not accommodate, nor does he soften down a single syllable of what he had just asserted. The sacred penman does not deny that they who are hardened by God perish according to the will of God. The Apostle does not admit it to be even possible, that a person who is hardened from above can perform what is good. Paul {instead of setting himself to answer our reasoning} contents himself with giving us a solemn caution, not to sit in judgment on the decrees of God, assuring us, that we cannot arraign the Deity at our own bar, without being guilty of the utmost boldness and impiety. Does God turn the wicked into hell, with all the nations that forget God? Is it a crime to say, he resolved to do it before hand? {Rom.9:13-23} All things were not only made for Him, but by Him; and if we admit wisdom, infinite wisdom, concerned in the execution of the work, we shall find that all things were made in the best possible state, to accelerate the accomplishment of the perfect end proposed. For the admission of any circumstance whatever, that tends to impede its accomplishment, is either a mark of weakness or ignorance; for if power exists, it is its province to prevent the impediment; and it is the part of Wisdom to point out its existence. As neither of the above considerations can apply to Christ, {who is emphatically called the All-wise and Omnipotent God,} I conclude, that everything was performed with an unerring eye, to the accomplishment of the design, without any deviation whatever in any single circumstance; and particularly man, either in his creation, in the ends and motives that determined his conduct, or his fall the result of both. Since the Scriptures of God positively assert, that Christ is a Lamb, and the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, and that all things were made by Him, and for Him in that capacity; and that man, the most glorious part of the works of creation, received a law from the hands of his Maker, which law had he obeyed, his obedience would have defeated the end proposed in constituting Christ the Sacrificial Lamb. We ought to enquire what could be the design of God in giving Adam such a law. Most assuredly God had a design in this, and a design perfectly in unison with the exaltation of Christ, to his Mediatorial Office; for, be it known, that in the mind, in the word, and in the works of God, there can be no schism. It is written, and that by the finger of God, that Jesus was exalted to be a Prince, in the management of the complicated concerns of every system, particularly of those that bear any affinity with men; who alone, amidst all the systems that have been formed, are called his portion; as if all other things and beings were no more than the necessary appendages of his church. "Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins." {Acts 5:31} United with his Princely dignity is his saving power, "and a Saviour, &c." In consequence of this lifting up, "his goings forth were of old, from everlasting." {Mic.5:2} Therefore; if God gave to Adam a law, with a design that Adam should obey that law, and in consequence of its obedience, secure the happiness of that state in which he was created. Adam did not obey, though God designed he should, according to the above reply. Adam did not obey, though God delighted in his obedience; Adam did not obey though God expected it; for whatever God designs, he expects the accomplishment; and if God delighted in the prosperous happiness of Adam, arising from his obedience, and expected that obedience to the given law, he must have been disappointed in the one, and deprived of the other. {According to this unscriptural scheme.} Attendant upon disappointment is misery, and misery commensurate with the nature of the disappointment; the disappointment arising

from the above considerations must be an infinite one, {I really shudder in following this felonious sentiment to that gibbet it richly deserves,} being the disappointment of God himself, consequently attendant with infinite misery; and if thus infinitely miserable, he is rendered incapable of constituting others happy; for how can he communicate that to others, of which he himself is deprived; and, if disappointed once, he may continue to meet with disappointments through an endless succession of eternal ages. The thought is blasphemous; and blasphemous as it is, it is the necessary consequence of the above blasphemous reply. Let the reply, with its infernal cargo of horrid consequences be hissed with abhorrence around the world. "We have a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place." {II Pet.1:19} This Divine Testimony yields an impenetrable covert, to screen us from every blast of error. Here we find that amidst all the fluctuating state of human affairs, the affairs of God are undisturbed. "I am the LORD, I change not" is his memorial still. {Mal.3:6} Suppose we contrast the reply with the known attributes of God? Did God, before the fall, view the apparently calamitous event? Yes, this cannot be denied, for he seeth the end from the beginning. "Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure." {Is.46:10} Did he possess power to prevent it? Yes, for he is the Lord of Sabaoth, being the original source, from whence all power proceeded. He must, of necessity of nature, possess that attribute in an infinitely higher sense than all the power, in all creatures collectively considered. The non-prevention of it must therefore be the result of a determination of mind; and the determination of such a being must have for its governing principle, the best, and the happiest consequences. {The exaltation of Christ, and the complete salvation of all the elect in Him.} Before I come to ascertain by the Divine Testimony, the design of God in giving the law in question, you will permit me to propose a few questions, for the perusal of the contemplative reader. Did God, and that from all eternity, design that his people should be redeemed by the death of Christ? While you retain, or profess to retain, any veneration for the Bible, you cannot answer in the negative. Did God design to redeem them in any other state but as fallen creatures? There are but two states in which they possibly can be considered, either innocent or guilty; as innocent they could not be redeemed, for the innocent needs no ransom; then they must be considered as guilty; for Christ was made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law; under the curse of the law, and their guilt reduced them to that state. Has God ever decreed any end, without implying in the decree, the means that will accomplish that end? If he has, he has designed to obtain an end, without means to effect it. To believe this, is to suppose, that God decrees not only without any certainty of obtaining the end, but also without a possibility of attaining it; for there can be no possible effect produced without a corresponding cause. Let those who cavil at the truths of God, seal their tongues in silence, until they see that all the ways of God are mysteriously awful, yet mercifully consistent. Has the Fall been succeeded by a dispensation of greater wisdom, greater goodness, greater love and compassionate tenderness, than could otherwise have been revealed? Yes; the mysteries of electing love, the unsought grace of the Everlasting Covenant, generate in the mind such exalted, and such transporting ideas of the Most High, that nature, could we even pry into all her hidden secrets, and explain all her mysterious laws, appears but a feeble effect of his power; while the other unbosoms his heart, and brings the weary and distracted mind of the guilty to repose upon the covenanted lap of uncreated faithfulness. What sight can be compared with a God in our

nature bleeding, that the wounded infant, weltering in his blood might live? Ezek.16:6-14. Do the children of God here and in Heaven, consider themselves under greater obligations for their redemption than creation? Yes; for in Heaven, where every power of the mind is properly attuned to celebrate the praises of God, there is no mention made of creation, but redemption, {Rev.1:5,6,} and this is perfectly consonant with the nature of things, for the means that obtain an end, have no glory, by reason of the glory that excelleth in the end itself. It is admitted, {such in fact are the professions of all that have an attachment to revealed religion, whether Calvinists or Neonomians,} that greater glory results to God, and greater happiness flows to man, in consequence of the 'new order' of things, than could have been, had Adam retained the dignity of his original state. How can we exonerate man from some kind of obligation to the Devil, for the introduction of that misery into the world, which has been succeeded by such a bright effulgence of compassion, which, while it absorbs the guilty tear, and removes misery from the heart, awes the power of Satan into nihilty, and obliges him, with a distracted roar, to contract his claw and drop his prey, "thus the prey is taken from the mighty." The idea of an event, {which involves such astonishing consequences,} taking place without the consent, {nay, if God gave them a law in order to prevent it,} contrary to the will, against the inclination, and in opposition to the designs of the Supreme Governor of the world is so derogatory to God, so dishonorable to his Character, and so contrary to the written Word, that I cannot admit it; for, upon its very surface I read a vile impeachment of all those attributes that endear his Government and that constitute God the Object of my worship. When I view the circumstances that existed before, and that succeeded the event, I am additionally confirmed in my opinion, respecting its appointment; and I will defy the world to prove, with all its subtilized sophistry, any difference between the fore-knowledge of God and his Divine decrees. The circumstances I refer to are inseparably connected with the Eternal Settlements of the Covenant of Grace. Why then will any impute that to God, which would render a polluted wretch hateful and detestable to wretched men? Why should God's government be tarnished by such a foul and unfounded obloquy? When God said that, "all was very good," he had no reference whatever to any supposed stability in the things created to abide in that state. God knew the contrary, and his having given all things unto Christ, before their existence, is a proof of his appointment. Had God designed the streams of happiness to flow from the pure fountain of nature's excellency, could Satan contaminate the fountain that God had made pure, or dam up the streams that he commanded to flow, and gladden the world if he could, against the will of the Lord, and in opposition to his Divine Appointment, our miserable minds are called upon to contemplate a reigning Devil, a ruined world, a vanquished and a disappointed God. The works of the Lord were all impeccably good, internally so, for all were perfect in their kind. They were good in their tendencies to produce those effects that accelerated the accomplishment of the Divine Plan. The decrees of God, and the motives of human actions, are essentially different; yet, under the inspection of Divine wisdom and under the control of Divine power, they are necessary parts of that indivisible whole that accomplishes the decreed end. Men in their actions, are as guilty as if they opposed the designs of God; for the decrees being hid, cannot be a motive of action. Numberless instances are easily adduced to prove this. The crucifixion of Christ was an event decreed of God; for this end he came into the world; he could not be crucified without means, the means and the end being inseparably connected. We find that both are equally the subject of prophecy; and as the prophecy is founded upon the Decree, both must be equally the subject of that decree. The

oracles of Truth inform us, respecting Christ who was to be crucified, that he should be a "stone of stumbling and a rock of offence," &c., {Is.8:14,} being an offence to them, their angry passions were soon irritated, and under the influence of Satanic power, they released a murderer, and crucified the Lord of life and glory. Are we to suppose that the ignominious death of the cross was the effect of diabolic influence, and of Jewish opposition, irrespective of the Appointments of God? We find in the word, that his crucifixion was decreed; and that the Jews, as the means, were decreed also; and further, that the decree was not the result of their time-state rebellion, but from eternity. "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." {Acts 2:23} "And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient; whereunto also they were appointed." {I Pet.2:8} The existence of Judas, to complete the works of redemption as a mean, was as necessary as the existence of Christ. One of the ends of Christ's death was the fulfillment of prophecy; he could not have been betrayed without Judas, for Judas was appointed thereunto; and the appointment of him forever exclude all others from the power of doing it; and had it not been so, the Scriptures would not have been fulfilled. "Those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled." {Jn.17:12} I know the squeamishness of moderate divines, and of moderate professors, {though the idea of moderate Christians and moderate divines has something in it very problematical,} when speaking, or more properly when thinking of speaking of the decrees of God, instead of adhering to the plain testimony of Scripture, instead of feeding the doubtful mind with established truth, they substitute a palaver of their own, which is only intelligible to the Egyptians. None can effect a cure, but him who is constituted our Covenant Head, and he effects the cure, not by laying an additional weight upon the palsied shoulders of agonized humanity, but by giving the soul, to see that according to the design and eternal purposes of Jehovah, that there is a divine oneness between Christ and his people; and that all preceding dispensations were only preparatory means in the hands of God, to the introduction of this. Christ was constituted from eternity the Head of his church, which is his body; and if so, his church must of necessity, had a virtual existence in Him, otherwise it is impossible for us to conceive of a perfect Head, irrespective of the body over which he presides; and as the blessed Redeemer was constituted not only a governing, but a suffering Head, the number of members which composed his body were ascertained, and the degree of sufferings he was to endure specified. As a head of a public body, "Adam was a figure of him that was to come." We existing in the loins of Adam, in consequence of that existence, are involved, and that justly, in the guilt of that act; and, as Adam never existed without bearing this relation to all the generations that sprang from him, so neither was Christ considered as the anointed of the Father, irrespective of his church. What God discovers to us in time, was eternally effected in his Divine purposes; and the purpose of God gives existence to all persons and things. This Divine Union is thus represented by the late Dr. Gill; being so truly excellent in itself, and so consistent with the Scriptures, that I shall introduce it in the author's own words:

I. An election union in Christ: This flows from the love of God, election presupposes love; {II Thes.2:13;} particular persons are said to be chosen in Christ, as Rufus, {Rom.16:13,} and the apostle says of himself and others, that God had chosen them "in Christ", and that before the foundation of the world. {Eph.1:4} Election gives a being in Christ, a kind of subsistence in him; though not an actual being, yet at least a representative being; even such an one as that they are capable of having grants of grace made to them in Christ, and of being

blessed with all spiritual blessings in him, and that before the world began; {II Tim.1:9, Eph.1:3,4;} and how they can be said to have a being in Christ, and yet have no union to him, I cannot conceive. Besides, in election there is a near relation commences between Christ and the elect; he is given to be an Head to them, and they are given as members to him; and as such they are chosen together, he first in order of nature, as the Head; and then they as members of him; and nothing is more common with sound divines than to express themselves in this manner, when speaking of the election of Christ, and his people in him; particularly, says Dr. Goodwin "as in the womb, head and members are not conceived apart, but together, as having relation to each other; so were we and Christ {as making up one mystical body to God} formed together in the eternal womb of election." And in the same place he says, "Jesus Christ was the Head of election and of the elect of God; and so in order of nature elected first, though in order of time we were elected together; in the womb of election he, the Head, came out first, and then we, the members." Now what relation can well be thought of nearer, or more expressive of a close union, than this of head and members? Christ is the chosen Head of the church, the church the chosen body of Christ, "the fulness of him that fills all in all," {Eph.1:22,23;} hence is the safety and security of the saints, being in Christ through electing grace, and united to him; and therefore said to be "preserved in" Him; herein and hereby put into his hand, made the sheep of his hand, out of whose hands none can pluck them, nor they ever fall. "To them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called." {Jude 1:1} II. There is a conjugal union between Christ and the elect, which also flows from love, and commenced in eternity. By the institution of natural marriage, the persons between whom it is contracted become one flesh, as did Adam and Eve; and a nearer union than this cannot well be conceived of; whose marriage was a shadow and representation of that between Christ and his church; whom, having espoused, he nourishes and cherishes as his own flesh; and they become one, and have one and the same name, Christ, that is, Christ mystical. {Eph.5:29-32, I Cor.12:12} Now though the open marriage relation between Christ and particular persons takes place at conversion, which is the day of their espousals to him, {Jer.2:2,} and the more public notification of it will be when all the elect of God are gathered in, and shall in one body be as a bride adorned for her husband, and the marriage of the Lamb shall be come; and this declared in the most open manner, and the nuptials solemnized most magnificently, {Rev.21:2;} yet the secret act of betrothing was in eternity, when Christ, being in love with the chosen ones, asked them of his Father to be his spouse and bride; and being given to him, he betrothed them to himself in loving-kindness, and from thenceforward looked on them as standing in such a relation to him; and which is the foundation of all other after acts of grace unto them; hence, because of his marriage relation to his church, he became her Surety, and gave himself for her, shed his precious blood to sanctify and cleanse her from all the impurities of the fall, and other transgressions; that he might present her to himself a glorious church without spot or wrinkle or any such thing; even just such a church, and in such glory he had viewed her in, when he first betrothed her. {Eph.5:25-27} So with the Jews there was a private betrothing before open marriage, and the consummation of it; at which betrothing the relation of husband and wife commenced, {Deut.22:23,24,} and so Christ is said to be the Husband of the Gentile church before she was in actual being. {Is.54:5} III. There is a federal union between Christ and the elect, and they have a covenant subsistence in Him as their Head and Representative. The covenant flows from, and is the effect of the love, grace, and mercy of God; these are spoken of along with it as the foundation of it, {Ps.89:2,3,33,34, Is.54:10,} hence it is commonly called the Covenant of Grace, and this was made from everlasting; Christ was set up as the Mediator of it, and his goings forth in it were so early, {Pv.8:23, Micah 5:2,} eternal life was promised before the world began, and blessings of grace so soon provided, {Tit.1:2, II Tim.1:9,} all which proves the antiquity of this covenant. Now this covenant was made with Christ not as a single person, but as a common Head; not for himself, or on his own account only, but for and on the account of his people; as the covenant of works was made with Adam, as the federal head of all his posterity; hence he is said to be the figure or type of him that was to come, {Rom.5:14,} so the Covenant of Grace was made with Christ as the Federal Head of his spiritual offspring; and for this reason a parallel is ran between them, {Rom.5:1-21, I Cor.15:1-58,} as if they had been the only two men in the world, the one called the first, the other the second man. Christ represented his people in this covenant, and they had a representative union to him in it; all that he promised and engaged to do, he promised and engaged in their name and on their account; and when performed it was the same with God, as if it had been done by them; and what he received, promises and blessings of grace, he received in their name, and they received them in Him, being one with him as their common Head and Representative. IV. There is a legal union between Christ and the elect, the bond of which is his suretiship for them, flowing from his strong love and affection to them. In this respect Christ and they are one in the eye of the law, as the bondsman and debtor are one in a legal sense; so that if one of them pays the debt bound for, it is the same as if the other did. Christ is the Surety of the better testament; he drew nigh to God, gave his bond, laid himself under obligation to pay the debts of his people, and satisfy for their sins; who being as such accepted of by God, he and they were considered as one; and this is the ground and foundation of his payment of their debts, of his making satisfaction for their sins, of the imputation of their sins to him, and of the imputation of his righteousness to them. In short, it is the saint's antecedent union and relation to Christ in eternity, in the several views of it in which it has been



considered, which is the ground and reason of all that Christ has done and suffered for them, and not for others; and of all the blessings of grace that are or shall be bestowed upon them, and which are denied to others; the reason why he became incarnate for them, and took upon him human nature with a peculiar regard to them, was because they were children given to him; and why he laid down his life for them, because they were his sheep; and why he gave himself for them, because they were his church; and why he saved them from their sins, because they were his people. {Heb.2:13,14, Jn.10:14,15, Eph.5:25, Mt.1:21.} In a word, union to Christ is the first thing, the first blessing of grace flowing from love and effected by it; and hence is the application of all others; "of him are ye in Christ Jesus", first loved and united to Christ, and then it follows, "who of God is made unto us wisdom and righteousness, sanctification, and redemption." {I Cor.1:30} So Dr. Goodwin observes, that union with Christ is the first fundamental thing of justification and sanctification and all. Christ first takes us, and then sends his Spirit; he apprehends us first; it is not my being regenerate that puts me into a right of all these privileges; but it is Christ takes me, and then gives me his Spirit, faith, holiness, etc. {John Gill, Body of Divinity, 1767}

The fourfold view we have of this Divine union in the above representation, is grounded upon the Divine Testimony, and has for its basis the Authority of God; and while it secures the glory to his name, it establishes forever the absolute perpetuity of that state, to which the guilty offender is admitted by the parental efforts of electing love. As this choice which God made of his people was independent of their concurrence, so neither does the certainty of its application nor its continuance arise from the unison tenor of their minds with the means of its manifestation. "Sinner I have loved thee, I have passed by thee, in thy blood, I said unto thee, in thy blood live." There exists in all men naturally, a disposition of mind which induces them to believe, that God takes a gracious notice of them in proportion to the pious resolutions they have formed, and the piety {falsely so called} of their lives. They cannot suppose it possible that God has fixed his affections upon a guilty wretch, whose swinish nature has led him to the thickest and deepest mire. They suppose that we are first to choose God and his ways, and then there is no fear but God will choose us. This is not the established order of Divine Operations. "Ye have not chosen me but I have chosen you, &c." {Jn.16:6} The choice originated with God. "I am found of them that sought me not." As this choice is the act of that God who cannot be mistaken, he therefore knowing the end from the beginning could not choose them from a mistaken view of their real characters. Men choose, and they as far as it in them lies, counteract the effects of their original choice, because they are deceived in the objects of that choice; but blessed be God, this cannot in any possible sense whatever apply to him; for his Divine Perfections cannot admit the idea of a secondary act, superior in its effects to the primary efforts of his mind. God knew from the remotest period, what he would constitute them in time, and to what state they would be brought by their disobedience at any given period of that time-state existence, he having laid upon him {Christ} the iniquity of us all, must have known them in their number, in their malignity, and in their demerit, otherwise how could the sins, all the sins of God's people, be charged upon Christ; and how could the charge by being brought home with all its weight to him heal us, without a union being constituted between Christ and his people, and a covenant responsibility on his part for them? However awful the scene, for this end Christ was the elect of God, for this end and purpose; and God knowing the state of his chosen people, constituted him who never approved of sin, a sin-offering for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. {II Cor.5:21} Having, by an unremitting adherence to the preceptive part of God's law, obeyed, and by his painful death, met the full penalty annexed to the transgression, he removed the curse and rendered it eternally honorable. The result of both obedience and sufferings, in the language of the Holy Spirit, was well pleasing unto God; pleasing, as it afforded a sufficient protection to the objects of his love, from the awful consequences of sin, and served as an impenetrable shield against

the malignant opposition and the destructive power of Satan. "The LORD is well pleased for his righteousness' sake; he will magnify the law, and make it honorable." {Is.42:21} The truth of this is further corroborated by the existence of a covenant, a covenant well-ordered in all things and sure. {II Sam.23:5} Being well ordered it necessarily meets with all the wants and difficulties of God's people, and in its bosom are contained all that they can need. This covenant is their stay in adversity; it forms an immovable base for their hope, and assures them a safe conduct through the storm, and a sure protection from danger; and whatever circumstances attend the Christian, whether they are adverse or prosperous, they cannot affect the stability of the covenant or the interest of the Christian in its eternal blessings. "For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the LORD that hath mercy on thee." {Is.54:10} This covenant as it respects us, is all of grace, as it respected Christ with whom it was made. "I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David {Christ} my servant." {Ps.89:3} It was an solemn arrangement of obedience and sufferings, and having complied with all its terms as our Surety and Head, this Divine Covenant irresistibly operated to the removal of all the obstacles arising from the breach of the Adamic covenant. We were originally branches of that family, and the only method by which we could possibly be betrothed unto another, was by becoming dead to the law; in ourselves it could not be obtained, for the rights of the law are unalienable, but being dead to the law through the body of Christ, we are lawfully married to another. This truly interesting subject is thus expressed by the Holy Spirit; "for the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress; but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man. Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God." {Rom.7:2-4} Now, in consequence of this procedure of mercy and mysterious love, the sinner, or rather the church, is legally constituted the bride of the Lamb. This Divine union has therefore these four divine pillars for its support; the electing love of God, the covenant of eternal mercy, the actual betrothing of the church by Christ, and the justice of God sanctioning the whole, seeing the whole is lawful, just, and right. All the attributes of God are glorified, his truth substantiated, and his mercy magnified; the release therefore of a Christian is neither the effect of an unworthy compromise, nor a disgraceful flight, it is the regular result of eternal determinations, the legal consequences of their effect, the just reward of a suffering Saviour. "As for thee also, by the blood of thy covenant I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water." {Zech.9:11} Thy prisoners, perfectly correspondent with the argument that Jesus uses, in order to ascertain the right of the guilty to divine protection; "thine they were, but thou gavest them me." {Jn.17:6} The design of the gift was this redemption; the consequences of that redemption is an indubitable right to all the blessings of the New Covenant; and in the words above cited, there is a solemn recognition on the part of the Father, of the complete satisfaction arising from the blood-shedding of his Anointed. Samuel Reece {Commentary upon the work of David Culy; entitled: GLORY OF THE TWO CROWNED HEADS, 1800}