

GOD'S PURPOSE ACCORDING TO ELECTION.

ROM. ix. 11. —For being not 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; (12) It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger.

WHAT was God's purpose? We can safely refer to *Gen.* iii. 15, which has been properly designated as being the very core of revelation, of the Scripture; "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." All the Scripture preceding this promise explains why it was given; and all succeeding it, shows how it was fulfilled. It was God's purpose, then, to bring into the world one of woman born, who should destroy the works of the devil. *I John* iii. 8. To carry out this purpose, God chose his own instruments, according to his own wise and sovereign will; having no respect to what any one had done, whether good or evil; for in the case of Esau and Jacob, they were not born when the election of Jacob was announced; demonstrating that the election was not of works that Jacob had done; for he had done nothing.

The first grand election, that of Noah, was, in some sense, by works; for it is the divine testimony that, "Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God. * * * And the Lord said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark; for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation." *Gen.* vi. 9; vii. 1. This election was to preserve the race, and bring in the seed of the woman.

The next election was somewhat similar, as to the person elected, Abraham; the great Abraham; the friend of God. "Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house (a complete election, choosing out), unto a land that I will shew thee: and I will make of thee a great nation, * * * and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." *Gen.* xii. 1-3. This election was of a good and great man, as the *souche*, the origin, of a nation from which would be brought in the seed of the woman, to be a blessing to all nations, the whole human race: and, like the former, it was for the accomplishment of God's great purpose of the redemption of man.

But now, this Abraham, whom God knew, "that he will command his children and his household after him (i. e. he while living will order his family aright; and so completely, that they will feel the influence of his administration 'after him,' after his decease), and they shall keep the way of the Lord," etc. *Gen.* xviii. 19; this Abraham had a son, Ishmael, whose mother was an Egyptian slave; and though Abraham's prayer was, "O that Ishmael might live before thee!" *Ib.* xvii. 18; he was informed that his aged wife, Sarah, should have a son; and of the two, the younger who was altogether of his own blood (Abraham and Sarah being of the same lineage), should be the *elect* link in the formation of the Abrahamic nation, from which should spring the seed of the woman.

The elect Isaac, the son of Abraham and his sister-wife in their old age, also lived to be advanced in life, before the birth of his twin sons, Esau and Jacob. Before their birth, their mother, Rebecca, was informed, that it was God's pleasure to *elect* the latter, Jacob; as the next link in the official series, in the formation of the great Abrahamic nation, from which should come

the seed of the woman, to accomplish God's great purpose, the redemption of man.

Now the principle of election ceases. Jacob having twelve sons, the twelve tribes spring from these; though two of these, Ephraim and Manasseh, are from Joseph, one being in the room of Levi, whose descendants were separated for the priesthood and its service. These tribes organized into a nation, under such institutions as kept them apart from all others; constituted the elect nation: and such was the efficiency of the organization, that it was clearly and sharply apart from all others, at the time of the bringing in of Jesus, the seed of the woman, the Christ of God, who came to be the Saviour of the world. He was promised to the world; not to the Jews, except so far as that he was to "spring from Judah," *Heb.* vii. 14, one of the twelve tribes.

But in all these elections, no one can perceive anything like an election of Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, the twelve tribes, to eternal life. There is nothing here but an election of instruments, agents, for the accomplishment of the great and glorious purpose of God, the redemption of man. These elect had great incidental, spiritual, religious advantages, while acting for the benefit of the race. As in the case of all needed functionaries, these were compensated for their public position and responsibility. "What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? (have we Jews been compelled to hear and endure the shrieks of our sons, in the painful rite of circumcision, that we might be kept a separate nation, merely to bring in the Christ for the common benefit of men; so that the Gentiles have as much interest in him as the Jews? Then what profit is there to the Jew in all this?) Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God. (They had the Holy Scripture which the Gentiles had not: and by comparing the

nations that now possess the Bible, with those that do not, as to their civil as well as to their religious condition ; we see clear proof of what a prodigious advantage, this fact gave the Jews over other nations. Yet, while the nation held this splendid advantage, all did not use it to profit.) For what if some did not believe ? shall their unbelief make the word of God without effect ?” *Rom.* iii. 1-3. Those that believed were saved.

There is no election unto eternal life, taught in the Scripture. The only election there mentioned is this election to official position, with its great incidental spiritual advantages ; and that for the carrying out of “God’s purpose.” When that purpose was fulfilled, and Jesus, the Christ, brought in ; then the dividing wall was broken down, and there was one fold, with One Shepherd. This blessed expansion of light and truth in Messiah’s time, was no novelty. It was fore-known, fore-ordained, predestinated, ages before its occurrence : “Moses and the prophets,” those holy writings were full of such predictions. The intention to bring in the nations, the Gentiles, was older than the giving of the Law : “Abraham rejoiced to see my day : and he saw it, and was glad.” *John* viii. 56. This is the key to all this class of words in the Scripture : all the nations were to be blessed through the agency of the elect Abrahamic nation, by their bringing forth the Christ, and having the keeping of the Scripture ; and such words as we just now quoted, *fore-known*, *fore-ordained*, etc., relate to the predictions of the prophets, concerning Christ, and the expansion of the Church so as to include all who should believe, Gentile as well as Jew : therefore we find these words amid allusions to the bringing in of the Gentiles ; which, to the Jew, was the great mystery kept secret from the foundation of the world, but now revealed at the coming of Christ. Thus the apostle, “—the preaching of Jesus Christ, according

to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, but is now made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith." *Rom. xvi. 25, 26.*

Here we have the statement, that Jesus Christ was to be preached in a certain mode; i. e. according to the revelation of "the mystery," the coming of the Gentiles to God directly through Christ; and not indirectly through Moses: a mystery this, which had been kept secret since the (Jewish) world began; but now was made manifest, and by the writings of the prophets, by the commandment of God, for they wrote as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, made known to "all nations" for "the obedience of faith." No circumcision, no performance of the various rites and ceremonies peculiar to the one elect nation: only faith: faith is the obedience required, now that the Christ has come; to authenticate whose coming, and typify his work, was the cause of this nation's election to the duty of being the torch-bearer for the nations.

This very word "purpose" (*prothesis*) used here by Paul, in this phrase "the purpose of God," is significant. It is found in the N. T. twelve times. Of these, four times it refers to the shew bread; three times to human purpose; five times to the divine purpose respecting the salvation of all men, Gentiles as well as Jews. And as to the four references to the shew bread, "—since part of the frankincense put upon the bread was to be burnt on the altar for a memorial, i. e. of the bread (*Levit. xxiv. 7*), even *an offering made by fire* unto the Lord; and since Aaron and his sons were to *eat* it in the holy place (*Levit. xxiv. 5-9*), it is evident that this bread typified Christ, first presented as *a sacrifice to*, or rather *to the presence of, Jehovah*, and then becoming *spiritual food* to such as *in and through* him

are *spiritual priests* to God, even his Father. See *Rev.* i. 6; v. 10; xx. 6. Comp. *I Pet.* ii. 5." *Parkhurst.* So, that nearly the whole use of this word "purpose" (*prothesis*) in the N. T. is with reference to this very point, the redemption in Christ Jesus for men; and not for Jews, except as men: "For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love." *Gal.* v. 6. The obedience of faith is all: believe and thou shalt be saved.

So, we see God's "purpose," *prothesis*, to bring in the Redeemer of men, revealed, made known clearly, *Gen.* iii. 15; and the *to menein*, the continuance, the persistence of the purpose "according to election," according to, in the use of the principle of election, the sovereign choice of his agents; we see plainly noted in the divine history, if we choose to read it: for there is neither secret nor mystery in that; it being recorded in all the perspicuity we could desire. First, the election of Seth, Enos, etc., down to the great election of Noah to tide the human race over the flood, and multiply it on the earth. Second, the election of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and the twelve lesser patriarchs, to produce and organize the elect nation, for the production and authentication of the seed of the woman, whose wounded heel should bruise the serpent's head in behalf of man. And "the purpose of God" was accomplished by means of these elections; these sovereign elections; elections not because of the works of the elected, for the record is that Isaac, Jacob, and the whole Jewish nation, were elected before they were born, and of course before they had done either good or evil. But to what were they elected? Certainly, to act as the instruments, the agents of God's purpose of bringing in the Christ, to be the Redeemer of men. If the elect nation was elected to eternal life, the election in multitudes of instances, alas! was in vain, failed, came to nought. If the elect nation was elected

to hold in deposit the Scriptures, and produce the Christ, the election manifested the wisdom of God, in completely accomplishing his purpose; for that nation handed over to us those Scriptures, and the Christ; demonstrated facts these, by history and possession.

That this was done from "the foundation of the world," is clear enough, and entirely intelligible. But that it was so arranged, in every particular, "from all eternity," we do not vouch. If it were so revealed, we should accept it as a revealed, inscrutable fact, above our thoughts; but as to understanding what such a phrase means, we are very sure that no finite intelligence can do it. It faints, after its utmost power of flight, without having crossed the threshold. When one says, "From all eternity," he means nothing; he can mean nothing; he can only darken counsel with words.

We have the history of election, plainly, very plainly written; and we can easily see that it dates back as far as to the outset of our race; Seth the younger, was preferred to Cain the elder, the assassin, the fratricide. Why, then, instead of accepting and rejoicing in the blessed and instructive narrative, demonstrating to us the loving interposition of an offended, insulted God; and of his persistent purpose, and continued choice of agents for its accomplishment, until the oracles of God and the Christ of God, were placed by those agents in the possession of mankind; why should we waste our time, weary our powers, and worry each other in vain attempts to penetrate to the "from all eternity"? Such controversies are not only useless, but hurtful. God, our Father, has not seen proper to open to us an access to the depths of the past eternity; and, we suppose, it would be very useless to do so: for with the aid of all the powers we possess, we could never explore them. We are not capable of any benefit from such revelation, were it made to us: and wisdom dictates the better plan,

of accepting the inspired history of election ; and learning from it the loving, persistent care of God, to secure to all our race the redemption that is by Jesus, the Christ.

In the same manner we read the apostle's allusion to the case of Pharaoh, the unbelieving king of Egypt. We have a quite detailed statement of the case in the book, Exodus ; and need not be puzzled and confused by conjectures. God was about to bring Israel out of Egypt, to the land the nation was to occupy, until the coming of Christ. He proceeded, in his providence, to prepare the great leader Moses, whom he sent to Pharaoh, supernaturally empowered, commanding him to release his people. He did not excite them to rebellion, or to civil war ; thus attempting to bring his people away without shedding the blood of their unjust and cruel task-masters. Upon the king's refusal, a series of plagues was commenced ; but, though the king occasionally gave way, acknowledging his fault, and promising obedience if the plague should be removed ; yet his heart was hardened by the divine forbearance, until the cry of horror at the death of the first born was heard throughout the land. Then he and his court, in their wild dismay, hurried off the Israelites who had prepared themselves for the predicted departure. This was hardly done, before Pharaoh and his court, equally hardened by the very providence that should have subdued them to repentance, mustered an army and pursued after the Israelites, to enforce their return.

Up to this point, history furnishes no clearer example, of the divine patience with a cruel, deceitful, promise-breaking, obstinate sinner. Having spared him and his country, the horrors of a sanguinary insurrection, which they so richly merited at the hand of this evil-entreated people, he commanded him to release Israel, his people, and sent the order by a most extraordinary ambassador.

Refusing to obey, he was made to feel and fear the consequences of his disobedience, with increasing pressure, and repeated releases from the scourge. Was there ever a clearer case of careful interposition in behalf of an oppressed people ; or wiser and kinder measures used with their oppressors ? But, as in the cases of other individuals and other nations, the goodness of God, which should have led them to repentance, only hardened the hearts of this king and his people. Then came the end. Undismayed by the miraculous separation of the sea, so as to afford a passage to the Israelites ; Pharaoh and his host, in hot pursuit, rushed into the awful opening, as though they would make the very plan of God for the escape of his people, the means of their capture. This was the time of the end. The waters rolled back into their natural level. All was over.

As many an instance of base ingratitude has demonstrated, kindness, forbearance, mercy will not always soften and improve the human heart ; but it frequently hardens under such influence. Goodness and severity were both tried perseveringly in Pharaoh's case ; and he was not overwhelmed, until he put himself where destruction was without alternative.

We must understand the apostle's expressions, consistently with the history to which he refers. Had he told us, that there was a king whom God ordered to do a certain act, and hardened his heart to prevent the wretch from doing it ; and continued chastising ; threatening, hardening him, until he brought him with a numerous, well-appointed army into an opening made in the sea, where he drowned him and his host for not doing what God himself had prevented him from doing : all this stated, and no historical light upon it : we would have pronounced it so opposite to the clear and abundant revelation that God hath made of himself ; that it must have been brought into the sacred text surreptitiously. Let any one read the great revelation of God

as made to Moses, *Ex.* xxxiv. 6, 7 ; and he could not reconcile the hypothetical statement just presented, with such a character as is there portrayed. Could Jesus, the express image of the Father, the brightness of his glory, have done such an act as that? The idea cannot merit a thought ; it is an utter absurdity. And if any one should transcend this, by affirming, that God not only did this, but coolly decreed it " from all eternity ;" did we not remember the splendid passage in Exodus, just cited, we would stand in silent horror, expecting his lips to blacken with the guilt of such an utterance.

We cleave to the history, and remembering the scope of the apostle's argument, he being " in great heaviness of heart " because of his people's entanglement in this same error as to election, they not seeing the temporary character of their national mission ; he informs them that God's great purpose of redemption must proceed, according to his own wise, kind, persistent sovereign will ; notwithstanding his patience, mercy and wisdom should melt some and harden others : as the same bright, glorious sunbeams soften one substance, and harden another, according to the nature or condition of each. The expression " have I raised thee up " (*exeegeira se*) is to be understood not as done *originally*, or *from thy birth*, but as the Hebrew word means " I have caused thee to stand, or subsist," *Ex.* ix. 16. " I have preserved thee from perishing by the preceding plagues." So the LXX. translate the word by *dieteereethees*, " thou hast been preserved." *Parkhurst.* I have raised thee up from thy prostration by plague after plague, " that I might shew my power in thee ;" as he did. But no sane man will suppose that God's power can only be seen in the destruction of sinners. When he stayed a plague, and lifted Pharaoh and his nation from prostration, he shewed his power in or

by Pharaoh; and had the repentance of the king been sincere, and had the once haughty monarch now submissively and kindly permitted Israel to go in peace; what a glorious exhibition it would have been of the divine power to save! The salvation of both parties would have glorified the divine power, certainly as much as the salvation of one, at the expense of the destruction of the other. And certainly it would have been more pleasing to Him, who has declared so emphatically, "As I live, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked."

Furthermore: with reference to God's showing his power, we might refer to Moses himself, the great agent in the demand made of Pharaoh, for *his* idea of the exhibition of the divine power. Consulting *Numbers* xiv. 11-21, we read, "And the Lord said unto Moses, How long will this people provoke me? And how long will it be ere they believe me, for all the signs which I have shewed among them? I will smite them with the pestilence, and disinherit them, and will make of thee a greater nation and mightier than they. And Moses said unto the Lord, The Egyptians shall hear it (for thou broughtest up this people in thy might from among them); and they will tell it to the inhabitants of this land: for they have heard that thou, Lord, art among this people, that thou, Lord, art seen face to face, and that thy cloud standeth over them, and that thou goest before them, by day-time in a pillar of cloud, and in a pillar of fire by night. Now if thou shalt kill all this people as one man, then the nations which have heard the fame of thee will speak, saying, Because the Lord was not able to bring this people into the land which he sware unto them, therefore he hath slain them in the wilderness. And now, I beseech thee, let the power of my Lord be great, according as thou hast spoken, saying, The Lord is long-suffering, and of

great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression, and by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generations. Pardon, I beseech thee, the iniquity of this people according unto the greatness of thy mercy, and as thou hast forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now. And the Lord said, I have pardoned according to thy word: but as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord."

In this luminous Scripture, we see Moses estimating the long-suffering power of God, as greater than his power of destroying. As a passionate man may have an arm strong enough to kill, but not a will strong enough to quell his rage and spare the offender. Alexander would have "shewn his power," by sparing the wine-heated, insolent Clitus: while by slaying him he showed the power of his arm; but sad kingly weakness. God exhibited his power, in sparing Pharaoh, granting him repeated respite, treating him with amazing forbearance, as in the case of every sinner, and not crushing him, until the king forced him to choose between the destruction of Israel, and of the Egyptians. Sparing Egypt longer, allowing him to pass the sea and overtake Israel, was to destroy the latter: so the waters were loosened from their miraculous restraint, and the army and the king were no more.

The power of patience, forbearance, long-suffering is wonderful. Passion, rage, fury is never significant of moral strength. "Let not the sun go down upon your wrath," means, that as a frail man one has experienced his passion to have been too strong for him: but as a Christian, he knows where to procure strength, and he must recover his self-possession. The power of creation cannot be greater than the power of preservation; while either by far exceeds the power of destruction. This Moses urges in the plea, that the destruction of offending

Israel, would be to the nations a sign of Jehovah's weakness. He was unable, they would say, to bring them into, and maintain them in, Canaan; and so he destroyed them: he was only able to destroy.

All this argument of Moses goes to show, that Pharaoh's submission and releasing Israel, and the blessings that would have ensued to him and his people, would have glorified God's power and name, in a way much more satisfactory to him whose "tender mercies are over all his works," than did the obstinacy and destruction of the wretched monarch. This is also confirmed by Jehovah's own blessed words, "I have pardoned according to thy word (argument, plea, the principle you have stated as to the display of power): but as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord." The pardon, the long-suffering, would do as well, then, as destruction, that "my name might be declared throughout all the earth." And so, the "raising up" was not to the throne, that he might be hurled from it into destruction; but, from his prostration by the plagues, to show God's amazing power of forbearance; "not willing that any should perish."

In the same category, we place the apostle's illustration of the power of the potter. We have a short history here in the divine record: but we have also some acquaintance with the facts connected with the trade of the potter. The history we have is at *Jerem.* xviii. 2-11, where a potter having a piece of work marred in his hands; he tried again and succeeded: the moral being in the eleventh verse:—"—speak to the men of Judah * * * saying, Thus saith the Lord, Behold I frame evil against you, and devise a device against you: return ye now every one from his evil way, and make your ways and your doings good." There is nothing in the passage but the potter at work with a lump of clay, making a vessel; and being disappointed, he

having the marred vessel in his power, it seems good to him, instead of tossing it away in his displeasure, to make another effort at completing his vessel. "O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the Lord. Behold as the clay in the hand of the potter, so ye in my hand, O house of Israel. At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it; if that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them. And at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it; if it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good, wherewith I said I would benefit them." No clay can justly complain against such a potter as this.

But the apostle's potter, who represents the same just, kind, patient, placable Being, "has power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor." It cannot be thought that the meaning is, that he makes one vessel to be honored in any other way, than to be put to honorable use; such as a cup for the master of a family, a vase to ornament a chief room, etc. Or that the vessel unto dishonor, is any other than one for culinary, or such, purpose, it never making any show, never being ornamental in the house. But each, the honorable, the dishonorable, is made for a purpose; either for utility or ornament; and in fact a proper ornament is useful, as it cheers the heart by pleasing our taste: and never, in all time, in any generation, was there a potter who made vessels for the purpose of destroying them. No such potter was ever heard of. When Jeremiah went down to the Scriptural "potter's house," he saw the potter at work, "and the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter:" but the potter

did not mar it intentionally ; he was disappointed in the result ; for “ he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it.” He tried once more, and this time he was successful : it seemed good to him to persevere, until he should succeed.

The lesson was, that God purposing to make a great nation of Israel, it had marred in his hand, but he did not wish to destroy it. Unlike the clay, in one great respect, Israel had marred himself, in spite of the skill and care of the divine Potter ; and now he is told to turn from his evil ; with the promise that God would resume his work and loving care. He refused, and never was Israel the nation God would have made it to be. This is as evident as any fact in the sacred volume ; which represents God as lamenting the folly, perversity, and wickedness of Israel, hindering his kind designs and efforts for their good. The potter did not propose repentance to his clay, as the one condition of his making a second effort to form it into a vessel. He had more sense. Potters do not hold their clay responsible for the marring. Never did the clay on a potter's wheel, know or care what he proposed to do with it. But Israel was another sort of clay, into which God had put life, reason, a sense of moral right, and the consequent responsibility ; and therefore to his clay, the divine Potter did propose a condition to be complied with on their part, for the resumption of his work. They refused : so the main purpose of God, the bringing in of the Christ through Abraham's posterity, was accomplished in despite of them ; but the incidental blessing of their “ much every way advantage, chiefly in their possessing the oracles of God,” was frustrated by their unbelief and disobedience. “ He would, but they would not.” *Luke* xiii. 34, 35. “ Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost : as your fathers, so ye.” *Acts* vii. 51. The

human will resists the Holy Ghost. We need not pretend a traversing of the "from all eternity" to find proof of this: the Spirit who does search all things, "yea, the deep things (*ta bathee*), of God," testifies to this awful fact; "—it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart." *Gen.* vi. 6. The clay was marred in the process, by its volition, and the Potter was so disappointed, that "he repented his preparation of the clay, and the marring grieved him at his heart." He made man upright: tempered wisely the clay, before placing it on the wheel; neglecting nothing on his part: but as the wheel turned obedient to the treadle, and the fingers of the Potter were employed in the formation of the vessel, the race; the wilful clay refused to be modeled after the mode chosen by the Potter; resisted, and his work was marred. It is a melancholy, but a plain, intelligible statement of facts.

Yet, the apostle speaks of "the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction." True: but what does he say of them? "What if God willing (*theloon*, having his will formed, decided) to shew (*endeixasthai*, to exhibit) his wrath, and to make known (*gnoorisai*) his power, endured (*eenegken*, bore, carried) with (*en*) much long-suffering (*polleei makrothumiai*, forbearance, long-suffering, patience under trials and afflictions) the vessels of wrath (*skeuee orgees*, vessels of wrath, wrathful vessels. *Winer*, 185, § 30: as *Theos tees hupomonees*, God who is patient.) fitted to destruction." Then there is nothing said here of destroying such vessels? Not one word. Not a syllable. Not a letter. Not a punctuation point. Absolutely nothing. But what is said of them? That although God "wills," is decided, determined to show his wrath at sin, and his power to punish; as becomes the "Judge of all the earth," who "will by no means clear the guilty;" yet he "endured with

much long-suffering the wrathful vessels," the wicked agents, the Jewish nation, warring against him, and "fitted to (*eis*) destruction." They were fitted to destruction: were in a condition in which if the hot thunderbolt had fallen upon them, no murmur against the ruin would have been just: yet God "endured them with much long-suffering;" a grievous burden was it to bear; yet he bore it (*eenegken*). A wonderful picture, not of the wrath kindled and provided "from all eternity;" but of the patience and mercy of him, who, while perfectly just, and fixed in his "will" to maintain his sovereign authority and dignity; yet has some wondrous way of reconciling with that authority and dignity, his "much long-suffering endurance" toward the "vessels fitted to destruction."

And who fitted those vessels to destruction? Not the Potter. Else the history of the potter's work, as we have it in the divine record, is vain, teaches us nothing to the purpose. The potter's work was marred; but certainly, not by his intention: no potter is fool enough for that. The potter makes out of the same lump, one vessel unto honor; for the chief room, or for the master's use: and another for the kitchen, or for the servant's use; but never any potter made a vessel for the purpose of destroying it: no potter is mad enough for that. How then are we to answer the question, as to who fitted these vessels to destruction? It would be a fearful outrage against the character of God as revealed in the Scripture, and illustrated there by the history of his Son, to say that the hand of the divine Potter "made them thus." Had he done so, he could not have endured with much long-suffering, what he had done wholly to please himself. We can conceive, that, in such case, he might have been greatly pleased, at seeing the complete success of his work; they being wholly fitted to destruction; and the bolt ready, waiting, provided "from all eternity," to shoot hissing down its

path of destruction, at his *fiat*. But, we cannot conceive, how any good man, with the Scriptures in his hand, the only source of faith, could turn away from it, and search amid the thick, impenetrable darkness of "from all eternity" for such a contradiction to the revealed character of him, who "— is long-suffering to usward, not willing (*boulomenos*, counseling, devising) that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." *II Pet.* iii. 9. "And account that the long-suffering of our Lord is salvation;" etc. *Ib.* iii. 15.

The answer to our question can be found, only in the free agency, the will, and consequent responsibility of the vessels. In this differed the house of Israel in the hand of God, from the senseless, inanimate clay in the hand of the potter. This same author of the Epistle to the Romans, was the author of the Second Epistle to Timothy; in which also he wrote something concerning "vessels to honor and to dishonor;" which we must cite, in the case. "But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth (*ostrakina*, a pot made of clay, earthen ware); and some to honor, and some to dishonor. If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified (*estai skeuos eis timeen heegiasmenon*, he shall be a vessel set apart unto honor), and meet for the master's use (*euchreeston tooi despoteci*, very useful to the master), and prepared unto every good work." *II Tim.* ii, 20, 21. Surely this is sufficiently plain. The vessel to dishonor is spoken of as having it in his own choice to remain with such, or purge himself from such, and "be a vessel separated (from his dishonorable associates) unto honor, and very useful to the master." And, surely is it implied, that if the vessel to honor chooses to degrade himself, he can do so: as he also is endowed with free agency, will, and the consequent responsibility; and every man finds

it easier to do wrong than right. If the weak vessel to dishonor can achieve the hard task of attaining to honor ; the vessel to honor can certainly contrive to attain unto dishonor : and if the vessel to dishonor is fitted to destruction, the vessel to honor can, by becoming a vessel to dishonor, fit himself to destruction.

This is not replying against God. We accept the divine statements, as given us in the Scripture ; and adore him whose long-suffering with those who have descended from honor to dishonor, fitting themselves to destruction, is designed to bring them to repentance, and thus back to honor and salvation : whose tender mercies are over all his works : who is long-suffering to usward, not purposing (*boulomenos*) that any should perish, but (purposing) that all should come to repentance. *II Pet.* iii. 9 ; and so if any perish, it will not be because of the divine purpose (*boulee*, design, purpose, decree, counsel) ; but because with a stiff neck and uncircumcised heart and ears, he resists the teaching of the Holy Ghost in the Scripture, and his mysterious, melting, merciful influences in his own frozen, wicked heart.

We append to this discussion, a few generic thoughts, which will now be the more easily understood.

The purpose of God according to election, *Rom.* ix. 11, was to fulfil his promise to man, *Gen.* iii. 15 ; which promise is the point of departure for all the inspired history, prophecies, providence, until this day. Of the sons of Adam, the number of whom is unknown, Seth was elected. Cain's birth is mentioned ; also Abel's, to show how Seth was "appointed (*schoth*)" in the room of Abel, who lost his position by the murderous hand of Cain, who was expelled from the official line because of the fratricide. Adam had sons and daughters, *Gen.* v. 4, but Seth stands alone in the line to Christ. So Seth had sons and daughters, but only Enos, the elect, is mentioned. For the same reason, of the sons and

daughters of Enos, we have no record of any but Cainan. And so on, with Mahalaleel, Jared, Enoch, Methusaleh, Lamech, Noah, each of whom had sons, but in each case, only the name of the elect son is recorded, until we get down to Noah, whose three sons are all mentioned, because Ham and Japhet, the two outside the official line to Christ, to which Shem was elected over Japhet and Ham his elders, were appointed two of the sources of the peoples renewing the earth. Of the five sons of the elect Shem, Arphaxad, the third in order of birth, was elected: then the son of Arphaxad, Salah; and his son, Eber (Heber); of whose two sons, Peleg and Joktan, Peleg, the younger, was elected. So, we have in the elect line, after Noah, Shem, Arphaxad, Salah, Eber (Heber), Peleg, Reu, Serug, Nahor, Terah; each of whom is stated to have had sons, but in the official line recorded, *Gen. xi. 10-26*, we have, in each case, only the name of the elect son, until we reach the last, Terah, where, as in the case of Noah, we have the names of his three sons, Abram (Abraham), Nahor, and Haran; of whom Abraham was elected to the official line, and the names of the others were recorded, because of the connection of their posterity with the history of Abraham. And as in the case of Noah's three sons, Shem the youngest, was the elect; so of Terah's three sons, Abraham, the elect, was the youngest. He and Shem both mentioned first of their several three, in the sacred narrative, because of their several eminence over their brothers, by their appointment to position in the official line. "Abraham was the youngest, but, by merit of excellence, named first." *Augustine, Gen. Quest. 25.* "Only named first because of his dignity, and his having been appointed the head and founder of the subsequent generation; and because to him was first made the express promise concerning Christ." *N. Lyranus.* That is, the revelation that the

nation springing from Abraham, should present the long-expected Christ, properly authenticated by sacred records, to mankind. This appears to be the real meaning of "God's purpose according to election," as illustrated by the holy records to which the Apostle appeals. This principle of election, resulted in the constituting the Abrahamic people, the agency for preparing the divine writings, and presenting the seed of the woman, fully accredited by those Scriptures, who was to bruise the serpent's head; or as John puts it, "To destroy the works of the devil." *I John* iii. 8. The election was for the benefit of men, the race; involving great incidental advantages to the elect, and great responsibility; but their personal grace and salvation, were to be secured only by personal faith and obedience.
