



PREFACE: A looming question haunts every school of theology: “How are we saved, how do we come to Christ – by the power of our own believing righteousness, or by the sovereign will and calling of God. Bishop JC Ryle, First Bishop of Liverpool, addresses the matter of ELECTION in the three postings of his tract on the same during the next three days.

ARTICLE 17 OF THE THIRTY-NINE ARTICLES OF RELIGION OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND:

17. Of Predestination and Election.

*Predestination to Life is the everlasting purpose of God, whereby (before the foundations of the world were laid) he hath constantly decreed by his counsel secret to us, to deliver from curse and damnation those whom he hath chosen in Christ out of mankind, and to bring them by Christ to everlasting salvation, as vessels made to honour. Wherefore, they which be endued with so excellent a benefit of God, be called according to God’s purpose by his Spirit working in due season: they through Grace obey the calling: they be justified freely: they be made sons of God by adoption: they be made like the image of his only-begotten Son Jesus Christ: they walk religiously in good works, and at length, by God’s mercy, they attain to everlasting felicity.*

*As the godly consideration of Predestination, and our Election in Christ, is full of sweet, pleasant, and unspeakable comfort to godly persons, and such as feel in themselves the working of the Spirit of Christ, mortifying the works of the flesh, and their earthly members, and drawing up their mind to high and heavenly things, as well because it doth greatly establish and confirm their faith of eternal Salvation to be enjoyed through Christ as because it doth fervently kindle their love towards God: So, for curious and carnal persons, lacking the Spirit of Christ, to have continually before their eyes the sentence of God’s Predestination, is a most dangerous downfall, whereby the Devil doth thrust them either into desperation, or into wretchedness of most unclean living, no less perilous than desperation. Furthermore, we must receive God’s promises in such wise, as they be generally set forth to us in Holy Scripture: and, in our doings, that Will of God is to be followed, which we have expressly declared unto us in the Word of God.*

*Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God.* (1 Thess. i. 4)  
*Give diligence to make your calling and election sure.* (2 Peter i. 10)

THE texts which head this page contain a word of peculiar interest. It is a word which is often in men's minds, and on men's tongues, from one end of Great Britain to the other. That word is "Election."

There are few Englishmen who do not know something of a general election to Parliament. Many are the evils which come to the surface at such a time. Bad passions are called out. Old quarrels are dug up, and new ones are planted. Promises are made, like pie-crust, only to be broken. False profession, lying, drunkenness, intimidation, oppression, flattery, abound on every side. At no time perhaps does human nature make such a poor exhibition of itself as at a general election!

Yet it is only fair to look at all sides of an election to Parliament. There is nothing new, or peculiarly English, about its evils. In every age, and in every part of the world, the heart of man is pretty much the same. There have never been wanting men ready to persuade others that they are not so well governed as they ought to be, and that they themselves are the fittest rulers that can be found.<sup>1</sup> A thousand years before Christ was born the following picture was drawn by the unerring hand of the Holy Ghost:

**A**BSALOM rose up early, and stood beside the way of the gate: and it was so, that when any man that had a controversy came to the king for judgment, then Absalom called unto him, and said, Of what city art thou? And he said, Thy servant is of one of the tribes of Israel. And Absalom said unto him, See, thy matters are good and right; but there is no man deputed of the king to hear thee. Absalom said moreover, Oh that I were made judge in the land, that every man which hath any suit or cause might come unto me, and I would do him justice! And it was so, that when any man came nigh to him to do him obeisance, he put forth his hand, and took him, and kissed him. (2 Sam. xv. 2-5)

When we read this passage we must learn not to judge our own times too harshly. The evils that we see are neither peculiar nor new.

After all, we must never forget that popular election, with all its evils, is far better than an absolute form of government. To live under the dominion of an absolute tyrant, who allows no one to think, speak, or act for himself, is miserable slavery. For the sake of liberty we must put up with all the evils which accompany the return of members to Parliament. We must each do our duty conscientiously, and learn to expect little from any party. If those we support succeed, we must not think that all they do will be right. If those we oppose succeed, we must not think that all they do will be wrong. To expect little from any earthly ruler is one great secret of contentment. To pray for all who are in authority, and to judge all their actions charitably, is one of the principal duties of a Christian.

But there is another Election, which is of far higher importance than any election to Parliament,—an Election whose consequences will abide, when Queen, Lords, and Commons have passed away,—an Election which concerns all classes, the lowest as well as the highest, the women as well as the men. It is the Election which the Scriptures call “the Election of God.”

I ask the readers of this paper to give me their attention for a few minutes, while I try to set before them the subject of this Election. Believe me, it affects your eternal happiness most deeply. Whether you are in Parliament or not, whether you vote or not, whether you are on the winning side or not, all this will matter very little a hundred years hence. But it will matter greatly whether you are in the number of “God’s Elect.”

In handling the subject of Election, there are only two things which I propose to do.

I. Firstly, I will state the doctrine of Election, and show what it is.

II. Secondly, I will fence the subject with cautions, and guard it against abuse.

If I can make these two points clear and plain to the mind of all who read these pages, I think I shall have done their souls a great and essential service.

NOTE: On the following day, we will present Bishop Ryles’ commentary on the first part of his tract;

#### **I. “WHAT IS THE DOCTRINE OF ELECTION.”**