



Part Two

I. I have firstly to state the doctrine of Election. What is it? What does it mean? Accurate statements on this point are of great importance. No doctrine of Scripture perhaps has suffered so much damage from the erroneous conceptions of foes, and the incorrect descriptions of friends, as that which is now before us.

The true doctrine of Election I believe to be as follows. God has been pleased from all eternity to choose certain men and women out of mankind, whom by His counsel secret to us, He has decreed to save by Jesus Christ. None are finally saved except those who are thus chosen. Hence the Scripture gives to God's people in several places the names of "God's Elect," and the choice or appointment of them to eternal life is called "God's election."

Those men and women whom God has been pleased to choose from all eternity, He calls in time, by His Spirit working in due season. He convinces them of sin. He leads them to Christ. He works in them repentance and faith. He converts, renews, and sanctifies them. He keeps them by His grace from falling away entirely, and finally brings them safe to glory. In short God's eternal Election is the first link in that chain of a sinner's salvation of which heavenly glory is the end. None ever repent, believe, and are born again, except the Elect. The primary and original cause of a saint's being what he is, is eternal God's election.

The doctrine here stated, no doubt, is peculiarly deep, mysterious, and hard to understand. We have no eyes to see it fully. We have no line to fathom it thoroughly. No part of the Christian religion has been so much disputed, rejected, and reviled as this. None has called forth so much of that enmity against God which is the grand mark of the carnal mind. Thousands of so-called Christians profess to believe the Atonement, salvation by grace, and justification by faith, and yet refuse to look at the doctrine of Election. The very mention of the word to some persons is enough to call forth expressions of anger, ill-temper, and passion.

But, after all, is the doctrine of Election plainly stated in Scripture? This is the whole question which an honest Christian has to do with. If it is not in the Book of God, let it be for ever discarded, refused, and rejected by man, no matter who propounds it. If it is there, let us receive it with reverence, as a part of Divine revelation, and humbly believe, even where we are not able to understand completely or explain fully. What then is written in the Scriptures? *"To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."* (Isaiah. viii. 20.) Is Election in the Bible, or is it not? Does the Bible speak of certain persons as God's Elect, or not?

Hear what our Lord Jesus Christ says:—*"For the Elect's sake the days shall be shortened."* (Matt. xxiv. 22.)

"If it were possible they should deceive even the Elect" (Mark xiii. 22.)

"He shall send His angels, and they shall gather together His Elect" (Matt. xxiv. 31.)

"Shall not God avenge His own Elect?" (Luke xviii. 7.)

Hear what St. Paul says:—*"Whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified and whom He justified, them He also glorified."* (Rom. viii. 29, 30.)

"Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's Elect?" (Rom. viii. 33.)

"God hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world." (Ephes. i. 4.)

"Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." (2 Tim. i. 9)

"God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." (2 Thess. ii. 13.)

Hear what St. Peter says: *"Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ."* (1 Peter i. 2.)

"Give diligence to make your calling and Election sure." (2 Peter i. 10.)

I place these eleven texts before my readers, and I ask them to consider them well. If words have any meaning at all, they appear to me to teach most plainly the doctrine of personal Election. In the face of such texts I dare not refuse to believe that it is a Scriptural doctrine. I dare not, as an honest man, shut my eyes against the plain, obvious sense of Bible language. If I once began to do so, I should have no ground to stand on in pressing the Gospel on an unconverted man. I could not expect him to believe one set of texts to be true, if I did not believe another set. The eleven texts above quoted seem to my mind to prove conclusively that personal Election is a doctrine of Scripture. As such I must receive it, and I must believe it, however difficult it may be. As such I ask my readers this day to look at it calmly, weigh it seriously, and receive it as God's truth.

After all, whatever men may please to say, there is no denying that the Election of some men and women to salvation is a simple matter of fact. That all professing Christians are not finally saved, but only some,—that those who are saved owe their salvation entirely to the free grace of God and the calling of His Spirit,—that no man can at all explain why some are called unto salvation and others are not called,—all these are things which no Christian who looks around him can pretend for a moment to deny. Yet what does all this come to but the doctrine of Election?

Right views of human nature are certain to lead us to the same conclusion. Once admit that we are all naturally dead in trespasses and sins, and have no power to turn to God,—once admit that all spiritual life in the heart of man must begin with God,—once admit that He who created the world by saying, “Let there be light,” must shine into man’s heart, and create light within him,—once admit that God does not enlighten all professing Christians in this manner, but only some, and that He acts in this matter entirely as a Sovereign, giving no account of His matters,—once admit all this, and then see where you are. Whether you know it or not, you admit the whole doctrine of Election!

Right views of God’s nature and character, as revealed in the Bible, appear to me to bring us to the same position. Do we believe that God knows all things from all eternity,—that He governs all things by His providence, and that not even a sparrow falleth to the ground without Him? Do we believe that He works all His works by a plan, like an architect of perfect knowledge, and that nothing concerning His saints, as His choicest and most excellent work, is left to chance, accident, and luck?—Well, if we believe all this, we believe the whole doctrine which this paper is meant to support. This is the doctrine of Election.

Now what can be said in reply to these things? What are the principal weapons of argument with which Election is assailed? Let us see.

Some tell us that there is no such thing in Scripture as an Election of persons and individuals. Such an Election, they say, would be arbitrary, unjust, unfair, partial, and unkind. The only Election they admit is one of nations, churches, communities,—such as Israel in ancient times, and Christian nations, as compared to heathen nations, in our own day. Now is there anything in this objection that will stand? I believe there is nothing at all.—For one thing, the Election spoken of in Scripture is an Election attended by the sanctifying influence of the Holy Ghost. This certainly is not the Election of nations. For another thing St. Paul himself draws a clear and sharply-cut distinction between Israel itself and the Election. “Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the Election hath obtained it.” (Rom. xi. 7.)—Last, but not least, the advocates of the theory of national Election gain nothing whatever by it. How can they account for God withholding the knowledge of Christianity from 350 millions of Chinese for 1800 years, and yet spreading it over the continent of Europe? They cannot, except on the ground of God’s sovereign will and His free Election! So that, in fact, they are driven to take up the very same position which they blame us for defending, and denounce as arbitrary and uncharitable.

Some tell us that at any rate Election is not the doctrine of the Church of England. It may do very well for dissenters and presbyterians, but not for churchmen. “It is a mere piece of Calvinism,” they say,—“an extravagant notion which came from Geneva, and deserves no credit among those who love the Prayer-book.” Such people would do well to look at the end of their Prayer-books, and to read the Thirty-nine Articles. Let them turn to the 17th Article, and mark the following words: “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."

I commend that Article to the special attention of all English Churchmen. It is one of the sheet-anchors of sound doctrine in the present day. It never can be reconciled with baptismal regeneration! A wiser statement of the true doctrine of personal Election was never penned by the hand of uninspired man. It is thoroughly well-balanced and judiciously proportioned. In the face of such an Article it is simply ridiculous to say that the Church of England does not hold the doctrine of this paper.

In controverted matters I desire to speak courteously and cautiously. I wish to make allowance for the many varieties of men's temperaments, which insensibly affect our religious opinions, and for the lasting effect of early prejudices. I freely concede that Wesley, Fletcher, and a whole host of excellent Methodists and Arminians, have always denied Election, and that many deny it to this day. I do not say that to hold Election is absolutely necessary to salvation, though to be one of God's Elect undoubtedly is necessary. But I cannot call any man my Master in theological matters. My own eyes see the doctrine of personal Election most clearly stated both in Scripture and the 17th Article of the Church of England. I cannot give it up. I believe firmly that it is an important part of God's truth, and one which to godly persons is "full of sweet, pleasant, and unspeakable comfort."