

THE DOCTRINE OF ELECTION.

It is well known that for years past I have opposed the popular, or Calvinistic view, of election. That view is essentially this: "God did, from all eternity, unconditionally, elect a certain number of persons to be saved, and these cannot be lost; and, at the same time, did pass by all the rest of the human family and left them to eternal damnation"; i.e., He reprobated them to eternal torments, or death, leaving them in a helpless and hopeless condition.

Such an idea of election I have opposed for fifty years past, and shall probably oppose it to the end of life, as unharmonious with the character of God and his professions of "love to the world," and the fact that Christ "tasted death for every man," and "gave himself a ransom for all," and that "God will have all men to be saved [to live] and come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2:4-6; Heb. 2:9).

With this statement before my readers, I trust they will not mistake nor misconstrue what I am about to say on election. That there is a Scripture doctrine of election it is useless to deny; and that it is a "Sovereign" one must also be admitted. God, of his own sovereign pleasure, elected the first Adam before he was created to be the head and representative of the human race in its animal nature. The same Sovereign will elected, "before the foundation of the world" (Eph. 1:4), the second Adam – the Christ – to be the head and representative of a spiritual race, to be developed in due time.

SCRIPTURAL ELECTION HARMLESS.

These elections are necessarily followed by a harmless reprobation, i.e., no other man can take either the first or second

Adam's place in the plan of God relating to our race. Neither of these elections are designed to exclude any of the race from the favor or love of God, but both are ordained for the benefit of the non-elected, to bring life and well-being to the entire race. The first Adam was elected to the office or work of multiplying and replenishing the earth, by filling it with inhabitants and subduing it (Gen. 1:28). The second Adam was elected to the office or work of bringing out a spiritual element in men and subjecting them to the will of God, so that they should find their happiness and joy in "communion and fellowship with the Father and Jesus Christ," the second or spiritual Adam (1 John 1:1-3).*

*Some of our readers will recognize the writer of the above as a former soldier of the cross who laid aside the earthly armor some years since. The above, from the pen of our esteemed fellow-laborer, was written probably ten years ago, and before we had come to see that the election of the church, now in progress, is to a change of nature, from human to spiritual: hence, in the fourth paragraph, the writer speaks of Christ selecting a spiritual element in man, instead of saying, as we now would, that the Second Adam becomes the head of a new or spiritual race, and the restorer of the human race. In the sixth paragraph also, under the light of further unfoldings of the same truth, we, instead of saying each was endowed with many or few talents "by the will of the Creator – each elected before birth to the capacity found in him by nature," we would say: Originally, the race in its perfect representative, Adam, was fully and perfectly endowed with a full range of talent; but, by reason of sin, and the degradation and imperfection consequent to the fall, the original range and scope of talents has been more or less interfered with and destroyed. It affords us great satisfaction to recall how clearly our Brother Storrs, in the above and other writings, presented the conditions which we were elected to fulfill if we would be joint-heirs of Christ's glory – that we must suffer with Him if we would be also glorified together. – EDITOR.

These two heads (the first and second Adam) were each elected, in distinction from all others, for these special offices or works; but it was for the benefit of others in both cases, though all others were reprobated in the sense these were elected.

THE CREATOR'S RIGHT TO ELECT.

The sovereign right of the Creator to elect whom he will to certain offices, or to perform a particular work, is undeniable. To deny this would be to deny that he is God, the MAKER of all things; and to such the language of Paul is applicable – "Nay, but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?" (Rom. 9:20). Without variety in the human family, what would society be, even in this life? If all were rulers, who would be the subjects? If all were subjects, who would be the rulers? It is evident to all that some men by nature are endowed with five talents, some with two, and some with only one; and each was thus endowed, not by his own choice or will, but by the will of the Creator. Each was elected, before he was born, to this capacity found in him by nature; improvement may increase this capacity in them all; but I speak now only of the election which gives them their place, at first, in the race – all ordered in infinite wisdom for the highest good, improvement and happiness of the whole race.

Men claim the right to elect their own rulers; and the act of doing it is called "Election" – that is, certain persons are elected to fill particular offices, not for their own benefit or aggrandizement, but for the good of the whole community. From the offices thus filled all others, for the time being, are reprobated or rejected; but the reprobation is a harmless one; the election was designed to

benefit all the reprobated; to watch over their interests and see that all were protected in their lawful pursuits, and to punish the disturbers of the peace. The elect rulers are armed with authority to enforce law and order, and under such a well-ordered administration the greatest amount of good will be possessed by all well disposed, both of rulers and the ruled. In this view election is stripped of its hateful aspects.

A CALM LOOK AT THE SUBJECT.

Let us now see if we can look calmly on the Scripture doctrine of election. In the first place, suppose it is an election of individuals, though that view may be modified as the investigation proceeds. For what are they elected, or to what? Is it to be saved, while all others are to be damned? Preposterous assumption! as unfounded in the Word of God as it is blasphemous. They are "chosen in Christ" and for Christ, to aid him in his work of blessing the race of Adam, for whom Christ "tasted death;" that is, "every man" – "every creature" – the "all" for whom Christ "gave himself a ransom," which will "be testified in due time" (Mark 16:15; 1 Tim. 2:6; Heb. 2:9). The elect are to become the "Bride of the LAMB" – his "joint-heirs" – to reign with him (Rev. 19:7,8; Rom. 8:17; 2 Tim. 2:12); and will sit with Christ on his throne in the regeneration (Rev. 3:21). Shall He not have the right to select his own Bride? May not He and His Father elect whom they will for the Bride of Christ? How can that be doubted? Her office is not to exalt herself, nor for herself. It is to exalt the Bridegroom and be workers together with him in blessing the race and carrying out God's great purpose of blessing "the world" – the whole human family.

Viewed in this light, what Christian's heart can object to the doctrine of election? No one is harmed by it; no one **[R624 : page 3]** is excluded from salvation or eternal life by it; but their ultimate

possession of those blessings is more likely to be secured by it. There is greater hope for those who are not of this elect Bride than there would have been but for her being thus elected and prepared to bless the others of the human race. This election need not and should not cause any jealousy in the minds of the non-elect; for, first, it is for the benefit of the non-elect that this election has been made; and, second, these elected ones have, in this life, to "drink of Christ's cup, and be baptized with his baptism" of sufferings, sorrows and reproach, be despised, reviled, have their names cast out as evil, their motives misconstrued, endure persecution in some form; many of them even unto death, having "had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover, of bonds and imprisonment: they were stoned, sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheep-skins and goat-skins, being destitute, afflicted, harrassed, maltreated, (of whom the world was not worthy): they wandered in deserts and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth" (Heb. 11:36-38). Such, in some sort or some measure, is the lot of the Elect Church of Christ, who, having been made partakers of His sufferings, will be sharers in his glory, having been fitted therefor by being perfected by sufferings like their Elect Head, Christ Jesus. They do not and cannot live as other men do in this present life. They are called out from the world, and live not for this world, but live above it, looking for a "kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world" (Matt. 25:34). Christ is not only their Redeemer, but their great Exemplar: to be Christ-like is the grand ruling motive; and this makes them separate from all other men in this life. They have taken Christ's yoke upon them, and are now learning of him who was "meek and lowly in heart."

These remarks lead to another branch of the subject. That the elect I have spoken of are a definite number, which can neither be increased nor diminished, is highly probable. But I shall not argue

that point at this time, another question being of more importance – that is –

IS THE ELECTION ABSOLUTE AS TO PARTICULAR PERSONS?

Or, Is it an Unconditional Election of certain individuals to fill the position of Bride to the Lamb? That the offer of this honor is confined to a portion only of the human family is a self-evident truth; for only a few of the race have ever heard the proclamation of the grace of God in Christ. It seems to follow that only those to whom the good news has been preached are candidates for this high and holy calling. That this election is not absolute, i.e., irrevocable, seems clear both from the Old and New Testaments. Peter calls upon believers to make their "calling and election sure" (2 Pet. 1:10). Paul tells us, "I keep under my body and bring it into subjection, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway" (1 Cor. 9:27); and again he says, "I have suffered the loss of all things...that I may win Christ...that I may know him and the power of his resurrection ...if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection (exanastasin) out from the dead," or out from among the dead" (Phil. 3:11); which language shows that Paul did not consider his election to that honor was absolute; hence, his laborings and sufferings to "make sure" that result.

Thus it appears that election, though it may be of individuals, is not absolute; it may be forfeited by "transgression." Paul is clear on this point when he says, "It is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again to repentance, seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh and put him to an open shame"

(Heb. 6:4-6). Again Paul says, "If we sin wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries" (Heb. 10:26,27). Such testimonies go to show that individuals may be elected to run in the race for the offices of "kings and priests" unto God and the Lamb, and yet may "come short of" a confirmation or inauguration into those offices by failing to obtain that maturity and perfectness which God calls them to, and by non-improvement of the grace bestowed on them; hence, the apostle exhorts on this wise, "We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain" (2 Cor. 6:6).

The Scriptures are full of cautions against carelessness in the use of God's grace, and against quenching the Spirit, and admonitions not to grieve the Holy Spirit of God, all of which go to show that there is a danger, at least a possibility, of failing to "make our calling and election sure." Too many persons, while writing or speaking of election, fail to make the distinction between being elected to run a race, and being elected to receive the prize. All who believe in Jesus have been elected (from the foundation of the world, if you please,) to run in the race for the kingly and priestly offices of the Kingdom of God; but none have been absolutely elected to the possession of those offices; this last election is suspended on conditions to be performed; hence, says the apostle, "So run that ye may obtain" (1 Cor. 9:24): obtain what? "An incorruptible crown." This belongs "to him that overcometh" (Rev. 3:21).

GOD'S DESIGN BY AN ELECTION.

This view of election, while it acknowledges the sovereignty of God and his right to bestow his gifts according to his will, shows that all is done with the design to benefit the race of men, as a

whole; so that while some are exalted to rule and teach, the others are blessed under and by their rule and instruction, thus uniting the whole family of man in a perfect harmony, diffusing perfect happiness and joy: "every man," ultimately, sitting "under his own vine and fig-tree," having none to molest or make them afraid, "for the mouth of the Lord of hosts hath spoken it" (Micah 4:4).

Such an election as here set forth, is a most powerful stimulus to holy living, deadness to the world, self-denial, patience in tribulation, watchfulness, constant reliance on God for help and support in all the conflicts to which we are exposed in this life: in short, it leads to that spirit of consecration to God and the Lamb which few professed Christians seem to have any idea of in these days, for most of them appear to be tolerably satisfied to be saved from hell or death; and a deep communion with the Father, and with his Son, Jesus Christ, seems of no great importance to them if they can only be saved. Saved they may be; but never gain a part in the company composing the Bride of Christ: they have not made that "calling and election sure," and hence, fail of being kings and priests unto God and the Lamb; though saved with an inferior salvation through the abounding love of God, they may be subjects but not rulers in the Kingdom of God; they are not heirs of the Kingdom, but they may share in the blessings which flow from the reign of Christ and his Bride in the Kingdom, when that reign is established over all the earth. How great their gain or loss will be, by their neglect to make "sure" their election, is a matter at present impossible to tell. Let each believer in Jesus see and feel that he or she is called, yea, elected to something more than to be saved; they are chosen to put on Christ; i.e., to become Christ-like, so as to be of his Bride, and occupy the place of kings and priests to God and the Lamb. Not to live for this end and office; to be satisfied with the idea of merely being saved somehow, is to undervalue their high calling and lightly esteem the exalted honor of being joint-

heirs to Christ's throne, and possessing the intimate relation of Bride of the Lamb. It is too much like despising the birth-right, like Esau; or selling it for a mess of pottage. What are all the charms of this present age – its honors, its luxuries, its wealth and grandeur – compared with the eternal honor and pleasure of being of the number that "follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth" (Rev. 14:4), and associated with him in all the wondrous works and glories of the "ages to come?"

Let all believers in Jesus "strive to enter in at the strait gate," and walk in "the narrow way," if they would make "sure" their "calling and election," and **[R624 : page 4]** not rest in the bare idea of being saved. The prize is before us: let us "so run that we may obtain" it.

– Geo. Storrs.
