

THE NATURE AND METHODS OF GOD'S ELECTIONS.

We have heretofore shown that election as taught in the Scriptures is not in opposition to, but in harmony with, the free moral agency of the elected classes. We have endeavored to show that, while during the Jewish age there was an election or selection of a "house of servants," as, during the present Christian age, an election or selection of a "house of sons" (Heb. 3:5,6) is in progress, yet neither of these selections was or is arbitrary so far as *individuals* are concerned. God did arbitrarily fore-ordain and determine that these two classes should be selected, and arbitrarily set apart a limited period of time for the selection of each; and for aught we know to the contrary, he arbitrarily and unalterably fixed the number of each of these classes, so that not one more, nor one less, shall complete each of these elect classes, fore-ordained in this plan. But he did not, and in harmony with his own justice he could not, arbitrarily fore-ordain and elect that certain individuals *must* be of these classes regardless of their wishes and endeavors, and regardless of the operations of his own arrangements and regulations governing these elections.

But before any are able to look at the subjects of Election and Reprobation intelligently, they must first of all get rid of the false and blinding idea that election implies "selected to go to heaven," and reprobation, "selected to go to eternal torture." No such significance attaches in any way to the words. God not only applies justice to his creatures in the laws governing them, but he applies the same to himself; hence it would be as unjust and impossible for God to choose, select or elect an unworthy person to heaven as it would be for him to torture a righteous person. Furthermore, to be unchosen to a particular office or position

does not imply that the unchosen one is wholly undesirable, but merely that he is not chosen to the particular office or position for which choice is being made.

Since God is good and all his plans are wise and beneficent, it follows that to be *selected* by him to perform any part of his plan is an honor and a favor. Thus God, having purposed in himself the *redemption* of mankind from the curse, and the consequent lifting up or restoration of all things (Acts 3:19,21), not only foretold it, but began preparations for that restitution. Accordingly, having also determined that this restitution should be accomplished by means of a "Kingdom of God" or a government of earth in harmony with his laws, and having predetermined that this Kingdom should be of two parts, a human and a spiritual, he began his preparation by selecting first the natural or human portion of the proposed, and as yet future, Kingdom.

Mark well that God fore-ordained these two classes, and the work for which he intended them, long before the individuals composing them had any existence. But how has this predetermined will of God operated in selecting the predetermined classes for the predetermined service of honor? Infinite wisdom [**R1457 : page 308**] made choice among the families of earth and chose Abraham and his family. Arbitrarily, and without reason for such a choice? Probably not: in all probability Abraham's family was best suited to the divine purpose, the best adapted to the execution of the plan God had in view.

It was part of Israel's difficulty that they supposed God's election of their nation an arbitrary one, and thought it a sufficient guarantee of God's exclusive favor to be able to say, Abraham is our father – we are, through him, the elect people of God. (Luke 3:8.) But this was a mistake; for though God had

chosen Abraham's family for a special service, and separated them by his law and favors from other nations, this was the extent of the favor they enjoyed – "To them were committed the oracles of God."

But by reason of this national favor each individual of that nation had special knowledge and opportunities beyond those of other nations; and their faithfulness or unfaithfulness, obedience or disobedience, to this knowledge and favor *decided* which individuals of that called and chosen and favored nation were worthy of the position of future honor and service as members of the human or earthly phase of the Kingdom of God, which is to be established in ruling and blessing power "under the whole heavens."

Which individuals, because of faith and obedience, were accepted as making their election sure to that future honor and service, we know only in part. The names of some of the most notable only are given by the Apostle. (Heb. 11:17-39.) These evidenced their worthiness of the favors of God held before them, by the sacrifices which they made of present honors and comforts, to obtain the future and lasting honors of heavenly promise. Therefore God will in due time honor them by manifesting them as his *elect* to the position and service to which he called them, and will give them a portion or share in the "heavenly city;" *i.e.*, in the heavenly government or kingdom which he will establish – the portion promised them and to which they and all Israel were called or invited, but for which the great majority were unworthy. Yet the rejected Israelites are not to be cast off from all favor of God; rather, they will be blessed by and under the righteous dominion which Christ will establish, and in which their fellows are granted the earthly portion. They shall see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the Kingdom of God, and they themselves unworthy of that honor.* – Heb. 11:16; Luke 13:28.

*Our Lord does not mention himself and the apostles as *seen* with Abraham and the prophets; because, though he and the apostles and all the overcomers of the Christian age will be in and of the same Kingdom, they will not be of the human phase or portion of it, but of the spiritual; and, like angels, invisible to mankind. Men will see only the earthly or human department of that glorious dominion.

The election of the full number for the human portion of the Kingdom ended about the time of Jesus' baptism and anointing, when he began to bring life and immortality to light. Then began the selection of the class which God had predetermined he would select from among men for exaltation to the "divine nature," and to constitute the spiritual phase of the Kingdom which will restore and bless the world. Of these Jesus was the first, the "forerunner," the chief or captain. In the selection of this spiritual class, Abraham's literal descendants, the Hebrews, have not been so exclusively favored as they were in the previous election; for instead of the light of truth (the "oracles of God"), through which the call is made, being confined to Israel, it has by God's design and arrangement gone out into all the earth – calling all who have "an ear to hear" to justification, through faith in the blood of Christ as their redemption price, and, further, to sacrifice and glory – the "high calling." The only pre-eminence given to Hebrews under this last call is that it *commenced* with them. (Luke 24:47.) The previous call was confined to them.

Nor should we overlook the fact that, though in the process of selecting these two classes certain individuals were elected or chosen to do a service in connection with the calling of these classes, this in no way implied their election to one of those classes. Thus Jacob, like Abraham, was chosen to be a father of the favored nation, and Moses, Samuel and others were chosen to a service in the first selection, as Paul and the [R1457 : page 309] other apostles, and others since, have been chosen and selected for special service as God's agents in the selection of the spiritual class; yet their being elected to this service was in no

way an infringement upon their free moral agency, and in no way decided for them the question of their final election to the class to which each was called.

Thus Paul, after telling us that God chose him and prepared him for this service in early life (Gal. 1:15), also assures us that he knew full well that the call to this service, and the fact that he was used as a servant in announcing the "heavenly calling" to others, by no means proved that he would attain the prize of his high calling.

To be called to such special service as Paul and the other apostles were called to was a special honor which they must appreciate to use; to have a call to the heavenly and the future service is a still greater honor; and the worthiness of the apostles, and of all who will attain it, is, during this age, being tested by the measure of their love and gratitude to God, as shown in their obedience, and proved by their self-denials.

That Paul understood that obedience or unfaithfulness to the present opportunities was to prove whether he was worthy or unworthy to be a member of the already elect or predetermined spiritual class – the "body of Christ" – is clearly evident from his many statements to this effect. For instance, he says, "I keep my body under, and bring it into subjection [I do not allow my human appetites, or ambitions, or hopes, to govern my course, but I permit the new mind, begotten of God's promises, to rule], lest that by any means, when I have preached to others [of the great prize for which we run and sacrifice], I myself should be a castaway"* [rejected as unworthy a place in that choice company which God has predetermined shall be composed of "**overcomers**"]. (1 Cor. 9:27.) "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended [or **grasped** the prize to which God called me, and for which I, with you, am running]; but....I press along the line towards the prize of the high calling." (Phil. 3:11-15.)

And in the preceding verses [R1458 : page 309] he tells us in what way he was running or pressing along the line to win this great prize which God has already predetermined to give to the class whom he would select for it. He tells us that he was casting away former hopes, and ambitions, and honors, as though they were worthless and vile, and spending every effort to win a place in the body of Christ, and to secure a share in the *chief* resurrection (to spiritual being).

*"Castaway," here, is from the same Greek word elsewhere translated "reprobate," and signifies *rejected – not accepted*.

He well knew that, because redeemed, "all in their graves" would in due time "come forth:" but he knew, too, that only the elect "little flock" would be raised spiritual beings like their Captain and Forerunner; and he was willing to sacrifice everything (as Christ also did) to obtain a place in that elect class. The Apostle knew also that from the moment of consecration he was *reckoned* a member of that chosen "body" or "bride" of Christ, and that his name was "written in heaven" (Heb. 12:23); and though he had full assurance of faith each moment, because of full knowledge that he was daily a living sacrifice, yet he also knew that for him to turn back, or even to "look back" (or desire to recover that which he had sacrificed), would prove him unworthy of the kingdom position. He well knew that he who wrote his name in heaven, when he consecrated and started to run, could blot it out; and that the condition upon which it would not be blotted out was, *faithfulness to the end of the race*. (Rev. 3:5.) And not until his faithful course was closing with martyrdom did he write, "I *have* fought a good fight; I *have finished* my course; I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up [reserved securely] for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." – 2 Tim. 4:7,8.

Yet, while remembering that God has made the deciding of the matter, whether or not we shall be members of the elect company to which he called us, to depend upon our faithfulness to the end – "unto death" – we should [R1458 : page 310] ever bear in mind, as Paul did, that the prize is not offered to us because of our worthiness of it, but of God's grace or favor; and that our running is acceptable only because of God's "*mercy*" in imputing to us the merits of Christ, our Redeemer, as the covering of our inherited weaknesses and imperfections. – Rom. 9:16. [R1458 : page 310]

SOME TEXTS OF SCRIPTURE

SHOWN IN THE LIGHT OF THE FOREGOING.

(1) "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he *fall*." – 1 Cor. 10:12.

(2) "Give diligence to make your calling and election sure; for if ye do these things ye shall never *fall*." – 2 Peter 1:10.

(3) "Whosoever of you are justified by the Law, ye are *fallen* from favor." "Christ shall profit you nothing." – Gal. 5:2,4.

(4) "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened,...if they shall *fall away*, to renew them again unto repentance." – Heb. 6:4-6.

(a) "Him that is able to keep you *from falling* [stumbling], and to present you faultless." – Jude 24.

(b) "I am persuaded that neither death, nor life,... nor things present, nor things to come,...shall be able to *separate* us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." – Rom. 8:38,39.

(c) "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me, and I give unto them eternal life. And they shall never perish, neither shall any *pluck them out* of my hand. My father which gave them me is greater than all; and no one is able to *pluck them out* of my Father's hand." – John 10:27-29.

In the light of the foregoing statement of the doctrine of election as deduced from Scripture, the above and similar texts cease to seem contradictory, and become clear, harmonious and reasonable. To show the harmony we have selected some of those apparently most contradictory and positive, which will serve to illustrate how all similar statements are in harmony. The first four show the possibility of falling from grace or favor; the last three seem to many to teach that to fall from God's favor is an impossibility.

It is a mistake to suppose that favor and love are synonymous, for though the favor of God always implies his love, yet the withdrawal of favor does not imply hatred. To illustrate: When God created our race representatively in Adam, he placed it in a position of favor, and when it afterward fell from that favor by disobedience to the conditions, God so loved the race (fallen from his favor), while yet sinners, as to provide a ransom for all, that thereby he might in due time restore all to the original favor, thus giving another or second opportunity to enjoy life as his favor, everlastingly.

Every act must be in harmony with his justice, love and wisdom: not with one alone, but with all of these divine attributes must every act of God conform. Hence in dealing with us, should we fall from his favor, whatever happens to us will be in full harmony with God's character – whatever his justice, wisdom and love indicate to be best. Let us keep this well in mind.

To fall from favor implies that those who fall had first been lifted up, given a vantage ground for present or future possibility

and advantage. The seriousness of the loss by a fall from favor depends upon the greatness or amount of the favor spurned or left.

Two of the three above-mentioned texts (*a,b,c*) assure us that God will not withdraw from us any favor he ever bestows; he will never cast us off or cause us to fall. And, more than this, his love is so great that he will not permit others to separate us from his favor contrary to our own will. And since his love is so great and his power all-mighty, we have full confidence that no power in earth or heaven can forcibly separate us from his love and the favors granted us in and through our Redeemer. Here rests our full assurance of faith – none can pluck us from our Father's favor and protection:

"In God I have found a retreat,
Where I can securely abide;
No refuge nor rest so complete,
And here I intend to reside.

"Oh! what comfort it brings,
My soul sweetly sings,
I am safe from all danger
While under his wings."

But is there then no danger? There is no danger of others plucking or forcibly separating us from God's favor, or turning his love away from us: the only danger is in our own doings. We can despise or lightly esteem the favors of God, and thus forfeit our privileges under those favors, and fall from them; but **[R1458 : page 311]** we cannot forfeit all favor, except by direct and open apostasy. God will not force his favors upon any, but decides that those who do not appreciate the favors, when made fully aware of them, are not worthy of them.

Text number 1 guards us on this very point. Our safety is in a vivid realization of our own helplessness and dependence upon God's favor. To realize our own imperfection and inability to justify ourselves is the safeguard against that self-righteousness which spurns justification as the favor of God, through the ransom given by our Lord Jesus. True humility and dependence upon God accepts his favor of justification in the way he provides it – through Christ's ransom – and thus prevents its possessors from spurning, and counting a common or ordinary thing, the sacrifice of Christ – "the blood of the covenant." (Heb. 10:26-29.) In harmony with this is the text marked *a*. God is able to keep us from falling or even stumbling over his favors; and he is so willing to aid us and keep us, that he has in his Word made every provision for our assistance, and assures us that the Scriptures are able to make us wise regarding his favors, so that we shall be able to avoid falling from them, and to obtain them.

Here text number 2 applies, and shows that while God has supplied every necessary aid to keep us from falling, he has left the matter in such a way as to make our earnest desire for the promised blessings a condition of our not falling from or failing to secure the favors offered us. We must give diligence and attention to the assistance and directions he has provided.

A difference in the extent of the fall and the seriousness of the consequences is shown in texts 3 and 4. The former shows a Jew who had trusted in his ability to keep the Law, who afterward came to see in Jesus his Redeemer, and became his follower, and thus reached and laid hold of *justification*, God's favor granted through the ransom. Under false teaching he had been led to the erroneous conclusion that though Jesus was a good example of holy living, yet all must still be justified, if at all, by perfect obedience to the Law. Paul addresses this one and all such in this text (3), and assures them that by such conclusions they renounce and reject God's favor, and place

themselves again just where they were before they heard of Christ – under the Law, which could never justify them. – Rom. 8:3 – margin.

Their conclusion that Jesus was merely an example and teacher was fallacious. There were, and had been, many noble exemplars and good teachers, and in thus regarding Jesus they were rejecting all that was specially valuable in him. Our Lord's example and teachings [R1459 : page 311] could never give us everlasting life, unless his *Ransom-sacrifice* had first justified believers. Regarding Christ as an "example" would be of no everlasting profit or advantage: nothing could thus advantage them until past sins were canceled, and they reckoned justified through the shed blood (the death) of Christ. – Rom. 5:9.

This fall from grace, though serious, in that it would hinder their progress and keep them on the level of the Jew and the unjustified world, would not necessarily be an everlasting loss or fall, because, if they perceive not their error sooner, the time will come when "every hidden thing shall be made manifest." Then a correct knowledge of the Lord shall fill the whole earth, and "none shall need to say unto his neighbor, Know thou the Lord! [or understand thou of the ransom for sin] for all shall know him from the least to the greatest;" and then, if not sooner, these and the prejudice-blinded Jews and all others shall see clearly and enter gladly upon the favor from which the Apostle tells us these were falling.

But the other text (4) tells of a fall from favor that is a far greater loss, and one which can never be regained in this or any other age. The Apostle assures us of those who thus fall away, that "it is impossible to renew [or restore] them again." Why is it thus – why the difference in these fallings? We answer: Because those of the class here referred to (Heb. 6:4-6) have had fuller knowledge; and by having gone along from favor to favor,

their fall is without excuse and indicates deliberation, a wilfulness, wholly inconsistent with their knowledge. While the others (text 3) were but deceived "babes," these (text 4) were matured and advanced in knowledge beyond first principles. And any who have not advanced to **[R1459 : page 312]** the point of favor here indicated could not fall from it; and from such state of favor only is it possible to fall so utterly as to be beyond hope – in the second death.

But notice carefully the conditions of such a fall – the height of the multiplied favors, from which if any fall it is impossible to restore or renew them. They must have been "once enlightened," brought to discern sin clearly, its penalty, and the ransom price given for the sinner. They must have "tasted of the heavenly gift:" not merely heard of Christ's sacrifice, etc., but tasted in blessed experience the results of that ransom in realizing sins forgiven, and communion and fellowship with God restored, through "the blood of the Lamb." They must have been "made partakers of the holy Spirit," coming into heart fellowship with God's plans, and for a time at least being co-workers with him – begotten by the Spirit to fuller appreciation of the truth and to new hopes and aims. They must "have tasted of the good Word of God," by experiencing the pleasures of the appreciated fulfilment of some of the statements and promises thereof, and by recognizing a grandeur and beauty in the as yet unfulfilled portions. These must also have tasted, experienced or come to appreciate "the powers of the coming age," realizing from the good Word of God the blessings and powers that will then be brought into exercise for the blessing and restoring of mankind, all as the fruit and result of the ransom.

Should such as have seen, tasted, experienced and enjoyed all these favors then fall away to the extent of "denying the Lord having bought them" (2 Pet. 2:1 – *Diaglott*), denying the ransom – the very foundation of all those hopes and blessings seen and

experienced – they would be treading under foot the Son of God, in rejecting the *blood of the covenant*, wherewith they *were* sanctified (and in which they had trusted, and on account of which they had been privileged to grow in grace and knowledge). If they thus count that blood an unholy (ordinary) thing, and despise the favor of God in providing the sacrifice for our sins (Heb. 10:25-29), there is no forgiveness for them further; no restoring from such a miserable fall from such heights of favor and knowledge. And who, except those who thus "fall away," would dispute the righteousness of this, our Father's decision? The expression of his justice and wisdom, in full harmony with his character of love, is that such shall "be as though they had not been" born. The prolongation of such lives could not be a profit or a pleasure to God, to themselves or to their fellows.

The sentence is manifestly just. It is wise, because if these have thus seen the grand outline of God's plans, and despise and repudiate the divinely-appointed foundation of it all, then moral force, the force of truth, is seen to be unavailing upon them, and God sees that thereafter it would be impossible to renew them or to make them recognize the beauty of his way. Therefore divine wisdom has decided that all thus out of harmony, without possibility of reformation, shall be utterly destroyed as thorns and briars are destroyed, and for the same reason. – Heb. 6:7,8.

And this same principle will obtain in the next age as well, when the full opportunities of that age of favors are enjoyed by all the world. Those who wilfully reject and despise the precious blood, spurn forgiveness through *it*, and thus crucify Christ afresh, will thereby fall hopelessly; because, after having enjoyed the blessings secured by the ransom, they spurn and reject it. Christ dieth no more. The one sacrifice once fully appreciated and wilfully rejected leaves the rejectors in the same state as though no ransom had ever been given. It remands them

again under the original penalty, *death*, extinction. And, because they had once been redeemed from it as the Adamic penalty, and had thus again come under it of their own will and act, it is called the *second* death.

Thus may not all see clearly God's election of classes for future service, and of nations and individuals for present service, and yet recognize that God leaves his creatures free to exercise their own wills in accepting or rejecting his arrangements and favors? He seeks such to worship and serve him as serve from the heart – in spirit and in truth; and such preeminently are the classes selected in this and in the preceding age for the Kingdom's positions and honors.
