

objects to this date, on the ground that it 'appears very improbable in view of the hostility of Antiochus to the Jews.' The objection seems to have no real validity. Antiochus, undoubtedly, became hostile to the Jews through the Maccabæan rebellion. But the foundation of Tarsus occurred before the rebellion had broken out; and the narrative in 1 and 2 Maccabees shows clearly that Antiochus had at first merely carried out the regular established policy of the Seleucid king in Palestine. He and his predecessors thought that they were benefiting the country by introducing Hellenic civilization into it. The building of a gymnasium, related in 1 Mac 1<sup>14</sup>, 2 Mac 4<sup>12</sup>, as an outrage, seemed to him a mark of kindness and forethought; worse almost in the eyes of the Jews was it that he made their young men wear hats, which the Oriental still detests; *shapha-li*, 'hat-wearer,' is still in Turkey equivalent to 'Frank.' He was actively aided in the work of 'civilizing' and Hellenizing the Jews by some of the most 'advanced' of their own nation. It is impossible to enter on this subject here; but our statement of the general spirit of Antiochus' policy is gathered purely from the narrative of the Jews themselves. The Maccabæan rising was

forced on by the Jewish patriotic party, and not by any new or serious oppression. It is true that in common with the rest of the Seleucid Empire Palestine felt the strain caused by the wars, the disasters, and the impoverishment of the empire during the two preceding reigns; and its sacred and national treasury was called on to bear part of the national burden. But nothing is recorded to show that Antiochus had departed in 171-170 from the hereditary policy of his dynasty in Palestine, or to make it probable that he would found his new cities in Cilicia on different lines from his predecessors. We must conclude that Antioch on the Cydnus, which was founded in 171, contained a body of Jewish citizens, enrolled in a special tribe.

The story that St. Paul's parents (or himself) migrated from Gischala, though accepted by some modern scholars, bears absurdity on its face. An immigrant from Gischala could not by any reasonable possibility acquire Tarsian citizenship, and was exceedingly unlikely to acquire Roman citizenship. St. Paul sprang from a Jewish family long resident in the Græco-Asiatic Tarsus; but his father and his family maintained a close relationship with Jerusalem, and kept the Jewish tradition and religion unimpaired.

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## The Identity of the New Testament Election with the Universal Offer of Salvation.

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THE decision of the House of Lords in the great Free Church case has once more brought into prominence the oft-debated doctrine of Election. We have no intention of reopening a discussion of this subject on the old, well-worn, now almost obliterated lines. But—daring though the attempt may seem—we shall endeavour to show, not merely the harmony, but the *identity*, of the doctrine of Election, as it stands in the New Testament, with that universal offer of salvation which is believed by many to be in at least apparent conflict with it. We cannot affirm this of the *Calvinistic* doctrine of Election as it stands in the *Confession of Faith*. Because, if God has determined that only a limited number shall be saved, it is impossible to see how an offer of salvation can be sincerely made to any

beyond that number. By many the two statements are regarded as constituting an antinomy, or apparent contradiction; both must be accepted, although we cannot reconcile them. We cannot help thinking that this tends towards Agnosticism and fosters indifference towards the whole subject. The mind cannot rest in two irreconcilable propositions, and although we find many things in nature and life which we cannot understand, we should not expect that these would be increased by what purports to be a *revelation*. If we succeed in showing that the two statements, as they stand in the New Testament, are, instead of being even seemingly contradictory, *identical* in their purport, the conclusion will be a suggestive, if not, indeed, a startling one.

How comes there to be a doctrine of Election in the New Testament at all? Most certainly from the fact that the Jews were (or believed themselves to be) the specially 'called,' 'chosen,' and 'elected' people of God, to the exclusion of all the rest of the world. They 'boasted' themselves of this their calling and election (forgetting its purpose), and they believed that, since God could not change, come what might, they—all Israel—should certainly be saved and inherit the eternal kingdom. This was why they were so bigoted, why they rejected Christ, why, in their self-righteousness and self-confidence, they despised the gospel and opposed and persecuted those who preached it.

Now, when the revelation of God's wider purpose of grace came to the apostles—when they apprehended the great truths that give *us* the gospel,—that God was the God of the Gentiles as well as of the Jews, that Christ died for all men, that the kingdom of God was open to all who would believe and obey, whether Jew or Gentile, Greek or Barbarian, bond or free, since Christ represented all and died for all,—they naturally and necessarily maintained and gloried in the fact that the *Gentiles* were as truly the *elect* of God as ever the Jews were; that they also were the chosen of God unto salvation from all eternity; that the divine 'calling' was no longer restricted to one people, but extended to the whole world; that, in other words, all mankind were embraced in a divine and eternal purpose of salvation, although it was only in these latter days that it had been revealed or made known. It was not (as was sometimes urged in former days) a calling to national or race privileges only, but an actual election to salvation (the conditions being complied with); not an election of nations merely, but of the *individuals* composing them. And there was not only this *election* to salvation, but actual complete provision had been made for the salvation of all who would believe (Ro 8<sup>28, 30</sup>).

The New Testament doctrine of Election, therefore, is neither more nor less than the assertion of the great, the glorious, the godlike truth, that God had 'chosen,' 'called,' and 'elected' to eternal salvation all who would believe in Christ, whether they were Jews or Gentiles. It is the selfsame thing, therefore, as these many statements which stand side by side with it, which have been so strangely supposed to be out of harmony with it, or even to be contradicted by it, namely, that

God wills that *all men* shall be saved, that He willetth not the death of a sinner, that He will have all come to repentance, that Christ 'tasted death for every man'; that God 'so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have eternal life.' Instead of these two kinds of statement constituting an antinomy or being even seemingly contradictory, they both, in different terms, affirm the same great truth of the provision for, and the extension of salvation to, all men; they are in fact *identical* statements. The one affirms the election of all; the other simply applies it.

We believe that there are no references to election in the New Testament that will not bear out the above statement. Where, in the Epistles, the fact of election is emphasized it is always, explicitly or implicitly, in connexion with the thought of the divine purpose to save all men, Gentiles as well as Jews. Taken out of their context (as they have unfortunately too often been) they might give countenance to something else. Election is often spoken of by theologians as 'a mystery.' So it was to the apostles. But that mystery—the hidden mystery, revealed by the Spirit in Christian times—is declared by Paul, in Eph 3<sup>6</sup>, to be nothing else than this: 'that the Gentiles are fellow-heirs, and fellow-members of the body, and fellow-partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus, through the gospel' (see also vv. 8-12). The great passage in Ro 8<sup>28-30</sup> occurs in an Epistle the very motif of which is to vindicate the extension of God's grace to Gentile believers, and to encourage them under Jewish opposition. Chaps. ix.-xi. make it plain that the reference is to the extension of God's election to the Gentiles, because of the unbelief of the Jews; not, however, to the ultimate rejection of Israel, because God means *all* to be saved. If the first chapter of 1st Peter emphasizes the fact of election, chap. 2<sup>9, 10</sup> makes it evident that the same thought was in the apostle's mind. The Jews had 'stumbled at the word, being disobedient. . . . But *ye* are an elect race . . . which in time past were no people, but now are the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.' We need not go over all the passages: the same great thought underlies them all.

It is true that we also find, running through the Scriptures, a doctrine of the election, or divine

choice and appointment of men and nations, to certain privileges and services, and for certain definite purposes, culminating in that of Christ Himself as Saviour and Lord of men, and of Christian believers to the life and service of God and His kingdom. In St. John's Gospel, also, we have the choice and election of some to a special service of Christ, but this is in order *'that the world may believe.'* Men are also said to be chosen *in Christ*, who represented all, and who died for all. All is from the *sovereignty of God*, but it is a sovereignty wholly worthy of the God of Love and Righteousness. Nowhere, with respect to eternal salvation, can we find it said or suggested that God has chosen some and left others with no possibility of being saved, or that any one is excluded, except through his own unbelief or disobedience.

The election is not an unconditional one. It depends on our response to God's call, on our faith in, and fidelity to, Christ. We are exhorted, just because of our election, to *'give the more diligence to make our calling and election sure, if we do so, we shall find an abundant entrance into the eternal kingdom. We are told to 'work out our salvation with fear and trembling; for it*

is God that worketh in us.' We are warned to give heed, 'lest any man fall after the example of unbelief.' Even Paul kept his body under, 'lest after having preached to others he himself should be a castaway.' The election, choice, calling, complete provision for our eternal salvation are real, definite, determinate, on God's part; but, as in everything else that God purposes on our behalf, our response must be given and our co-operation secured.

It was natural, and in every way most desirable that the apostles should encourage the Gentile believers by assuring them of the extension to them of God's calling and election, and of the complete provision that had been made according to the eternal purpose of God for their salvation. Nothing could better confirm them in the Faith or sustain them under the bitter opposition of those who regarded themselves as being exclusively the elect people. But we trust that enough has been said to show that the affirmation of such election is *the very same thing* as those statements which abound side by side with it (and which are for that very reason so found), that God had purposed in Christ, and had in Him made provision for, the salvation of all men.

## The Great Text Commentary.

### THE GREAT TEXTS OF THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.

ACTS XVII. 27, 28.

*'That they should seek God, if haply they might feel after Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us: for in Him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain even of your own poets have said, For we are also His offspring.'*—R.V.

#### EXPOSITION.

*'That they should seek God.'*—'God' is a better supported reading than 'the Lord'; but it has by some been regarded as a correction, made under the impression that 'the Lord' would not have been used before a heathen audience, as being liable to misapprehension from its applicability to the emperor.—COOK.

*'If haply they might feel after Him and find Him.'*—Here St. Paul himself adopts the refinement of the Greek style of speech. For by using a form of the hypothetical sentence which indicates a somewhat dubious hope, he avoids the direct and unpleasant assertion that men—the

Athenians included—had signally failed in their search after God. Instead of conspicuously realizing His presence, as by touch of hand, they had groped about, like men in the dark, without success.—RACKHAM.

*'Though He is not far from each one of us.'*—The speaker appeals, as he does in Ro 2<sup>16</sup>, to the witness borne by man's consciousness and conscience. There, in the depths of each man's being, not in temples made with hands, men might find God and hold communion with Him. It was natural, in speaking to the peasants of Lystra, to point to the witness of the 'rain from heaven and fruitful seasons.' It was as natural, in speaking to men of high culture and introspective analysis, to appeal to that which is within them rather than to that which was without.—ELLICOTT.

*'For in Him we live, and move, and have our being.'*—This conclusion follows from the divine nature—God as God is omnipresent; and so the apostle is led on to the doctrine of our dwelling in God, with all that it involves. If God is the giver of life and breath and all things, in Him we literally live and move and are. The continued