THE DOCTRINE OF ELECTION

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The Scriptures unquestionably teach the doctrine of election, but not unconditional and particular election. Because we join direct issue with Calvinists upon this question is no reason we entirely reject this doctrine. No intelligent person can fail to accept election who believes in the Word of God. What we reject is the perversion of this Scripture doctrine, which misrepresents the Divine character, which robs men of free agency, and which relieves them of all personal accountability for their sins, and which gives sinners a pretext for remaining in sin.

Our purpose will be to show what is Scriptural election, for all election taught by men is not after the Bible sort.

1. To elect means to choose, to select, to designate. It has the same meaning in the Scriptures as it does in every day life. In a government, to elect a man to office is simply to select him for the place, to choose him for the office named. He is designated by ballot for the office. So God elects certain nations for certain purposes, chooses certain persons for a particular work, and chooses men conditionally to salvation. As there is always a reason for the election of candidates for office, so there is certainly a reason moving the Divine mind in the election of nations and of persons to certain privileges.

The difference between the election of men to office in the political world and of God’s election of sinners to salvation, lies just here: In political elections, only one man out of several candidates can be chosen because there is only one office to fill. All the other candidates become the non-elect. Whereas, in the Divine election of men to eternal life, all are chosen conditionally in Christ, since salvation is provided for every fallen child of Adam, and no man becomes a non-elect save by his own choice. Every man is elected to eternal salvation, and all that is needed is for him to make that election sure. There are enough offices in God’s kingdom for all the race. The privileges and blessings to which men are Divinely chosen in Christ are conditioned entirely upon their voluntary acceptance of salvation, and their personal qualification for heaven, just as the assuming of the office to which men are elected and the receiving of the perquisites depend upon a voluntary qualifying of the candidate even after his election.

There is a sense in which God elects some to peculiar privileges, but the things to which they are chosen are temporal in character, and
others are passed by. This is a national election, or the election of nations for certain purposes, and not a choosing unto life eternal.

Again, there is an official election of persons which is the choosing of particular individuals to certain offices or for some definite work, when others are passed by, but this does not involve salvation.

But in electing men to salvation, none are overlooked or passed by. All are taken in, and every sinner is predestined unto eternal life, dependent upon his acceptance of the terms upon which salvation is offered. When it comes to eternal life, all men are conditionally chosen to the privileges of being heirs of God, and elected to the spiritual perquisites of children of God. In this election of sinners, none are left out. All men are elected. But it is essentially conditional. Men may either accept the Divine act by which they are chosen in Christ, or they can defeat the end for which they were elected.

If it be objected that a choice implies a selection out from others, and a passing by of those not chosen, we answer, first, that God passed by the angels that sinned, and made no provision for their salvation, and chose all of Adam's race to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.

And secondly, that God chose all those whom He foresaw would believe in Christ, and chose them because they believed, and passed by all who disbelieved, and because alone of their unbelief.

To predestinate means practically the same as to elect, the former being the stronger word of the two. To predestinate is to pre-determine from pre, before, and destinate, to determine—to determine beforehand. So God has predestinated all men to salvation through the atonement, or has determined beforehand to save every sinner who accepts Jesus Christ as his Saviour. And to make the act of predestination so effective that no man can perish in despair, He has made ample provisions for the salvation of the whole race, conditioned upon repentance and faith, and has made universal offers of mercy to all who will comply with the terms of salvation.

The religious world is divided into two great schools of thought upon election: Calvinists and Arminians.

First, Calvinists teach that election is particular or personal—that is, God before the foundation of the world, elected certain persons, known by name, to eternal life, for whom Jesus Christ alone died, whose eternal salvation is thereby absolutely assured, so that each elected person will be called, justified, and finally saved. None of them can possibly be lost, while no others can possibly be saved, for none but the elect are redeemed. All others are passed by in this Divine election, and have no part in it. And these elected persons are so definite in number that they cannot be added to or taken from.

Arminians deny this in toto, and teach that all men are elected in Christ, that none are passed by, and every man's salvation depends entirely upon his repentance, faith and obedience.
Secondly, Calvinists teach that this election is unconditional. That is to say, God in electing certain persons to eternal life, had no respect to their repentance and faith as foreseen, as a cause moving Him to elect them. The elect believe and repent because they are elected, and not, as we are taught, they are elected because they repent and believe. In this view, God elected particular persons, in the exercise of His sovereign will, and not that He saw any moral difference between those elected and those passed by; nor that He saw anything in the one class which induced Him to elect them, or foresaw anything lacking in the other class which moved Him to pass them by.

Arminians teach that God, in electing men to eternal life, has regard to repentance and faith, and that salvation is always conditioned upon man's submission to and co-operation with God in His plans.

Thirdly, Calvinists teach that this particular election of individuals to eternal life was from all eternity, and is to all eternity. So that it can never be nullified or defeated.

Arminians teach that God conditionally elected the whole of Adam's race to eternal life when Adam fell, and a Saviour was provided and promised; that it is absurd to talk of an act being eternally performed. The act of election supposes a moment when it took place, and this supposes a time before it was performed. So that it could not possibly have been from all eternity. And while men are elected to eternal life, yet it is invariably dependent upon man's performance of certain conditions from start to finish.

The whole tenor of the Scriptures shows that the Arminian view is correct, while Peter clearly teaches this when he says, "Wherefore, the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure." Only as we give diligence can our election ever be made sure, for by slothfulness and negligence we may defeat our election. If we were elected from all eternity to eternal life absolutely, and this act of God cannot be defeated in any way, what sense is there in urging believers to "give diligence to make their election sure?" The very words imply that election as to its final end can be nullified. So that election from all eternity cannot be made to consist with Peter's words.

If any one thing is taught in the Word of God, it is that the Divine election of sinners to salvation in Jesus Christ may be nullified by impenitence, unbelief, and disobedience; and, therefore, eternal salvation depends not upon an absolute decree of Jehovah, but upon present faith and continued fidelity.

We see this view harmonizing with this passage:

1 Peter 1:5—Elect according to the foreknowledge of God, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.

Mark you—This election is made effectual "through sanctification of the Spirit," which sanctification always comes by voluntary faith and prayer, while the final result depends upon "obedience" and the "sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ," which blood is never applied to any impenitent or unbelieving heart.

So we find conditional election again taught.
II Thessalonians 2:13—God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.

Here is a Divine choosing which was made “through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth,” the conditions being plainly stated. No intelligent Arminian can ever object to this kind of election, since it is entirely dependent upon “belief of the truth,” “sanctification of the Spirit,” and obedience.

There are three kinds of election found in the Bible.

1. The election of nations to peculiar privileges and for particular purposes.

This is national in character, and not personal. It is not an election unto eternal life, nor is it unconditional, but is largely temporal and conditional. Because a nation, therefore, is chosen and raised up for a special purpose, it does not follow that all the individuals composing that nation are elected unto eternal life, nor that all of its people will be certainly saved. Nor is it impossible to nullify this kind of election. This sort of Divine election has solely to do with time, and not eternity, since nations are rewarded and punished only in this world.

1. The choosing of the Jewish nation to be God’s peculiar people, is a case in point. They were a chosen people, designated for a specific purpose, who were designed to be His visible Church in the earth, the keepers of the oracles of God, who were to keep alive in the world the knowledge of the true God, and through which nation was to come the promised Messiah.

Romans 9:4—Who are Israelites, to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; whose are the fathers, and of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came.

Romans 3:1—What advantage then hath the Jew? Much every way; chiefly because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.

Here then we have the purpose of God in electing this nation to be a peculiar people.

Deuteronomy 7:6—For thou art a holy people unto the Lord thy God; the Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth.

A moment’s thought will show conclusively that the election of the Israelites to be a special people unto the Lord was not an absolute election unto eternal life, for thousands of them rebelled against God, and died in their sins. In fact, God Himself became angry with numbers of them, and purposely destroyed them. Here was the destruction of an elected people, or large numbers of them. Nor was it an unconditional election of the Jews, because often God was displeased with them because of their sins, and shut out of Canaan every one of them over twenty years of age who left Egypt, except Caleb and Joshua, because of their unbelief.

Moreover, the Jews of today are a rejected people, the example of a nation once chosen to high privileges, an elected nation, and yet
they are scattered, peeled, with no country. They failed to fulfill the conditions, defeated God in His purposes, and have nullified their election of God. See how God made choice of this people, for a special purpose, and keep this purpose in mind, and you their see an election which is not particular, which does not involve eternal life, and which is essentially conditional.

Abraham was chosen to be the head of this nation, and God called him to leave his own country and go out into a strange land. He was an elected man, but not chosen unto eternal life by this act of election, but selected to be the beginning of a great nation, with whom God proposed to do great things. Was Abraham thus elected to eternal life? Not by any means, for this selection of Abraham did not carry with it Abraham’s salvation, nor guarantee the salvation of all his descendants.

First, not till several years after God’s call to leave his native land was he justified by faith.

Secondly, Abraham could have disobeyed God, and refused to do as He had commanded. In which case, he would have been rejected, and some one else chosen.

Thirdly, the whole of his descendants could have turned aside from God, as was the case when Aaron made the golden calf, and God came so near destroying them completely because of their sin. And had it not been for an intercessor in the person of Moses, their destruction would have been accomplished.

Abraham had two sons born unto him, only one of whom was to be the son of promise. One must be in the line of descent. Which must it be? An election must take pace. One must be chosen, and the other passed by. But this was neither the election of Isaac unto eternal life, nor the reprobation of Ishmael unto eternal death. Keep in mind what God was seeking. He was hunting for a line of descent, and He found it in Isaac.

Now in turn, Isaac had two sons, Esau and Jacob, one of whom was to be elected to be the line of descent. Both could not be, that “the purpose of God according to election might stand.” Don’t forget that God was electing a nation for a special purpose, and so He chose Jacob, and passed by Esau. Here is where some people, not fully understanding the Scripture, have reveled in seeking to find ground for a personal, unconditional, eternal and absolute election of individuals to eternal life, and the passing by of others. But a careful study of the cases of these two boys will clearly show that these who thus misinterpret the Scriptures have no ground upon which to stand.

Keep in mind this transaction about Esau and Jacob was national and not personal, and a flood of light will be thrown upon it, and many seemingly difficult Scriptures will be made plain. The Ninth chapter of Romans will be seen not to be so difficult to understand, and much of the mist and fog will be dispelled from the mind.

Which one of these twins is to be chosen as the line of descent?
Contrary to the wishes of Isaac, the old father, the choice fell upon Jacob, and Esau was passed by. Now that this choice of Jacob and the passing by of Esau had nothing whatever to do with their eternal salvation, but was a national election, will appear if we consider the following:

First, the very language used at the birth of Esau and Jacob shows that it was spoken of these two boys nationally, and not personally:

Genesis 25:23—And the Lord said unto her, Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and the one people shall be stronger than the other people, and the elder shall serve the younger.

Mark these words—"Two nations," and "two manner of people are in thy womb." The names of Esau and Jacob are not mentioned and it is only with reference to their descendants the language is used. This is seen when we read what was said further: "The one people shall be stronger than the other people," which was true, for the Israelites, descendants of Jacob, were the stronger of the two—stronger than the Edomites, descendants of Esau.

"And the elder shall serve the younger," but Esau never did serve Jacob personally, while his descendants did, in the days of David, when they became servants to the Israelites. See 11 Samuel 8:14.

This proves conclusively that "the purpose of God according to election," in the cases of Esau and Jacob, could not have been a personal election, but national, having to do with two nations, and not these twins personally, of which nations these two boys would be respectively the heads, so that there is no foundation here for the unconditional election of Jacob and the utter reprobation of Esau.

Secondly, the words, "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated," when examined carefully in their connection, will furnish no ground upon which to ground unconditional election and reprobation. These words were not used at the birth of these twins, but several hundred years afterward, by Malachi. And it is only necessary to read what is there recorded to show that it was of the descendants respectively of Esau and Jacob that the words mentioned apply, and not of them as individuals.

Malachi 1:2, 3—Was not Esau Jacob's brother? saith the Lord. Yet I loved Jacob, and I hated Esau, and laid his mountains waste and his heritage waste from the dragons of the wilderness.

This was not true of Esau's personal possessions, but it was true of his descendants, the Edomites. See Ezekiel 35.

Moreover, the language used, must not be understood in its harshest sense. God never literally hated either Esau or his descendants. The word "hate," is not always used in the sense of bitterness, resentment, malice, but implies less love. So it is said that Jacob hated Leah, and loved Rachel, where it is manifest that he loved Leah less than he loved Rachel. The context itself in Genesis 29:30, 31, gives this very interpretation, where it is said, Jacob "loved Rachel more than Leah."
Again, in Proverbs 13:24, it is said: "He that spareth the rod hateth his son, but whoso loveth him chasteneth him betimes."

Here the simple meaning is that a father who does not punish his son for disobedience loves him less than the parent who wisely corrects his boy.

Again, we have this condition laid down for becoming the disciples of Christ.

Luke 14:26—If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother and wife and children, etc.

Does our Lord intend to teach that one must actually hate his parents, and his wife and children, in order to come to him? Surely not. What then? Simply this—that in order to be a disciple of Christ we must love others less than Him. Love for others must be secondary to love for Him.

So when it is stated that God "loved Jacob, but hated Esau," the manifest meaning was that He loved Jacob more than Esau, and preferred the descendants of the former to those of the latter in bestowing upon them certain privileges.

We come now to another step in this election of a nation for a Divine purpose. Jacob had twelve sons, from whose loins this nation was to come. But the promised Messiah was to be born of only one of these tribes. So a tribal election takes place. And Simeon, Reuben and Levi, the three first born, are passed by, and Judah is chosen. So Jesus was of the tribe of Judah, that the purpose of God according to election might stand. But does not every intelligent Bible reader see that this tribal election had nothing whatever to do with the salvation of either the heads of these twelve tribes, or of their descendants? Certainly it would be absurd to take the ground that because Judah was chosen as the tribe of which our Lord was to be born, therefore, Judah and all his descendants were to be saved, and all the other tribes were to be reprobated. Here is the choosing of a tribe for a particular purpose, just as the tribe of Levi was selected to be the ministers of the tabernacle.

Now to show that the election of the Israelites was not a particular and unconditional election unto eternal life, but was national in character and conditional, bear in mind that ten of the tribes of this chosen people have been so utterly lost that no trace whatever of them can be found, while the other two, Judah and Benjamin, are a rejected people, who have nullified their election of God.

All this serves to show conclusively that God's decrees concerning men and His acts of election are conditional, and not absolute. Jonah was sent unto Nineveh, with the message, "Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown," seemingly an absolute "shall," and yet Nineveh was not destroyed, but was spared because the people repented. So Hezekiah was told, "Set thy house in order, for thou shalt die and not live," and yet God's decree was changed by prayer, and Hezekiah had fifteen years added to his life. So it is with all of God's decrees which have for their end the salvation or damnation of men. They are essentially conditional. They may be changed, defeated, annulled by the will of man.
2. The choosing of the Gentiles as a people to equal religious privileges with the Jews in the Christian Church, is another illustration of this kind of election. It was the opening of the doors of the Christian Church to the world outside of the chosen people of God, and was general in character, taking in all of Adam's race besides the Jews. Here God exercised His sovereign right in making choice of a people to certain privileges, as well as deciding the time and the manner when this election should be revealed and carried into effect. It requires but a glance to see this was neither particular nor unconditional election, for this choosing of the Gentiles to these high privileges was general in character, and did not carry with it any guarantee of eternal life, only conditionally. For we well know thousands of Gentiles thus chosen have rejected Christ, lost their souls, and nullified their election of God. How many in this day are defeating God in His act of election, hid for ages in the Divine mind, but revealed to the great Apostle of the Gentiles?

This view throws wonderful light upon many passages in Paul's writings which have long confused many good people, who have become tangled in their minds upon this question of election. Take this passage as a sample:

Ephesians 1:4—According as he hath chosen us in him, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy, and without blame before him in love.

Here was the election of the Gentiles, in the Divine purpose, to Gospel privileges in Christ, hid from the Jews for hundreds of years, a great "mystery," as Paul calls it, and revealed to Paul, of which he speaks further on in the same Epistle:

Ephesians 3:3-6—How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery (as I wrote before in few words; whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ), which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his apostles and prophets by the Spirit; that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, and of the same body, partakers of his promise in Christ by the Gospel.

Here then is the "mystery of Christ," so frequently mentioned by Paul, not the unconditional election of particular persons to eternal life before the foundation of the world, but the choosing of a people in mass to the privileges of salvation through faith.

Having in mind the same thing, Paul writes again:

1 Thessalonians 2:13—But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.

There is no unconditional and particular election here, but it is stated that "in the beginning," (whenever that was—certainly in the beginning of time, and not from all eternity) God chose these Gentile Thessalonians to salvation, which salvation was to be obtained by them through voluntary faith, and by the sanctification of the Spirit—an election of a mass of people conditionally to salvation, to be made effectual only by the personal acceptance of Christ by each one of them.
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Take this view of the question, and it appears very plain when we hear Peter earnestly entreating believers to “give diligence to make their calling and election sure,” as if it were not yet sure, but was to be made sure by the personal diligence of those called and elected.

3. We might instance the Anglo-Saxon race as another illustration of the election of nations to peculiar privileges under the Gospel. To what high things is this people called? Is it mere chance that America, England and Germany, the three great Protestant nations of this day, are the leaders among the governments of the earth? Is the hand of providence not in the fact that while other peoples are passed by in the bestowment of great things, (we might narrow it down and say) the English speaking people have been elected of God to such exalted stations in the world, just at this time? It is the very same kind of election under which the Jews were chosen of God in Abraham’s day, and the same kind under which the rest of the world were chosen by God in the Apostle’s day.

Why God should thus elect Americans to such high privileges, together with other nations, we may not know, for this belongs to the mysteries of Divine providence. But this we do know: That the election of the Anglo-Saxon race to high stations and exalted privileges in this age does not by any means carry with it their absolute salvation. For is it not patent that thousands of them are wicked, defeating God in His gracious purposes concerning them?

Who that studies the times and is interested in Divine providence can doubt that God has chosen and raised up the English speaking people, “a vessel unto honor,” for some high and noble purpose? Of them it might be truly said, “Ye are a chosen generation.” Yet it by no means follows that all of this people are unconditionally elected to eternal life. The black race, the yellow race, and the red race, have not been so called and chosen. These less favored races have been passed by in this act of electing nations. But these unfavored races are surely not reprobated unto eternal death. They are simply loved less than the white race, so that in an accommodated sense, we might say, “America and England have I loved, but Africa, China, and India have I hated.”

If we will keep this in mind in reading the Ninth chapter of Romans, it will solve the riddle and untangle the puzzle which there seems to be recorded. Paul takes Abraham as a starting point, and shows that he was originally chosen as the head of this chosen people. Then of Abraham’s two sons, Isaac was chosen and Ishmael passed by. Isaac had two sons, Esau and Jacob, and Jacob was chosen as the line of descent, and Esau was passed by. Now that Paul speaks of this election in a national sense, and not in a personal sense, note that he uses the figure of a potter and the clay, and says: “Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump, to make one vessel unto honor and another unto dishonor?” That is, God has the sovereign right to make one nation unto greater honor than another, and the nation selected as a vessel for less honor has no right to say, “Why hast thou made me thus?” And so, if the “vessel made unto honor” fails
to fulfill the purpose for which it is made and chosen, then God has the sovereign right to destroy it as a nation, because of its infidelity, just as He did with the Jews. Is not that plain?

Unquestionably Paul had in his mind the words of Jeremiah, chapter 18:6, where the prophet uses this very figure of the potter and clay, and applies it directly to nations, and not to persons. He said he went down to the potter’s house, and the vessel he wrought was marred in his hands. So he made another vessel as seemed him good. Then the application is made. “O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter?” They had voluntarily marred themselves, and he was angry with them. And to show that God is speaking of them nationally, and not personally, hear what He says:

Verse 7: At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it, if that nation against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them. And at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it; if it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good, wherewith I said I would benefit them.

All of which goes to show here was an election not individual, but national, not absolute, but conditional.

II. The election of persons to particular offices and the choosing of individuals to some special work, is another kind of election found in the Scriptures.

This is not personal election, but is official, and does not involve present salvation and eternal life. The purpose of it is not the salvation of those elected, but the performance of some needed work, or the fulfilment of some definite mission. Nor is this election unconditional, since the success of it depends upon the voluntary consent of men, and the fulfilment of conditions. These thus elected can prove faithless, and can nullify God’s purpose in electing them. Many have done this very thing, as we shall presently see.

As samples of this kind of election, I point you to Abraham, who was selected in the sovereignty of God to be the head of a great nation, which should bless all other nations. And yet this did not elect Abraham unto eternal life. He could have refused to go out from his native land, and make his home among strangers, and thus have defeated God as far as he was concerned. It was several years after his call to leave home that he believed God and found the blessing of justification.

Moses was chosen to be the leader and law giver of this chosen nation, but this was not a personal election of this great man to eternal life. While Moses was chosen of God for this purpose, he voluntarily “chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.” This was his election unto eternal life, made by himself, and not made by God. Even after God had elected him to be the leader of His people, God became angry with him, and would not let him go over into the Promised Land.

Saul was chosen to be the first King of God’s chosen people, and shortly thereafter he was changed into another man, and received a
new heart, the Spirit of God coming upon him. It was not left to a popular vote who should be king, but God exercised His sovereign right in electing the man. Saul was God's choice, all others being pased by. And so no one had any right to object or complain: Yet this Divinely elected king was rejected by God for disobedience, and finally took his own life in battle, a striking illustration of the truth that one can be elected and yet be rejected, and a sample of man who once had a change of heart, but fell from grace, and died in his sins.

Saul, of Tarsus, was a case of election under this head. He was declared to be "a chosen vessel unto me to bear my name before the Gentiles and kings, and the children of Israel." But was this an election of Paul unto eternal life? We cannot think so, for his very office and work shows it was an election of Paul to be the great Apostle to the Gentiles, and not a choosing of him unto eternal salvation. That it was not unconditional, his words clearly imply in speaking of his conviction for sin before Agrippa, for he said, "Whereupon, O King, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision." Why speak thus if he could not have been disobedient, which would have been the case had he been unconditionally elected to eternal life?

Again, he says, "I keep my body under, and bring it unto subjection, lest after I have preached to others, I myself should become a cast away." It is very clear Paul was afraid he would fall from grace, and that he did not believe his election unto salvation was absolute. He had it in his power to lose his soul. This choosing of Saul, of Tarsus, was simply his election to be the great Apostle to the Gentiles.

The twelve disciples were thus elected to the apostolic office, and not unto eternal life. They were selected by our Lord to be His daily companions, witnesses of His miracles, and official representatives of His kingdom. To this they were chosen in this language:

John 15:16—Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye shall go and bring forth fruit and that your fruit should remain.

This could not possibly refer to an unconditional election unto salvation for the following reasons:

First, these men did actually choose Christ to be their Lord and Master, in obedience to His call, "Follow me," for they voluntarily left all and followed Him.

Secondly, any and all of them could have refused to choose Jesus to be their Master, as many others did to whom He gave the same command, and as some did who after becoming His disciples, "went back and walked no more with him."

Thirdly, even after becoming His disciples, which they all did voluntarily, thus electing themselves unto eternal life, they could have proved unfaithful, as Judas did, been rejected by their Lord, and died in their sins. Although chosen by Christ, an ordained by Him to be one of His Apostles, and even though promised a throne, yet he betrayed His Lord, and took his own life through remorse. Here is the case of a chosen Apostle who died in sin. If these men were unconditionally chosen unto eternal life, how came it to pass that Judas nullified that election, and failed to reach heaven?
Nor will it do to claim that he was never converted, for hear Jesus:

John 17:12—Those thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost but the son of perdition.

Judas was as much given to Jesus by the Father as were the other eleven disciples, but afterward became "the son of perdition.".

Nor is it at all reasonable to claim that "Judas was a devil from the beginning." Let no one quote that as Scripture, for he will advertise his ignorance of the Word of God. Have the advocates of unconditional election and final perseverance seen where this would put Jesus Christ? They would place him in the monstrous position of choosing a devil, one whom He knew at the time was a devil, and sending him out to preach His Gospel, cast out devils (which would be the absurdity of the devil casting out devils), and would make Jesus promise a throne to a devil. Who can believe any such nonsense? Judas is simply a case of one elected to a high office, not in that act of election chosen unto eternal life, but who proved unfaithful, and nullified his election.

Fourthly, the election of these twelve men to be the Apostles was done in time, and not before the foundation of the world. The choosing was done just after Jesus had spent all night in prayer:

Luke 6:13—And when it was day, he called his disciples, and of them he chose twelve whom he also named apostles.

Notice that from His disciples, who had already voluntarily chosen to follow Christ, He chose twelve men to be His apostles—the choosing of the twelve being quite different in time and in design from the choice made by these disciples to follow Christ.

Every minister who is called of God to preach is an illustration of the election of persons to office, an election which does not have to do with personal salvation. He is chosen, ordained, set apart, elected to a particular work, and this election is exercised by the sovereign right of God, while others are passed by. But how foolish would it be to say that these men whom God calls to preach are therefore elected unconditionally unto eternal life, while all others not thus called are reprobated unto eternal death? In this sovereign act of electing men to office, none have any right to object or complain, for God has a right to do as He pleases with His own, since this does not save nor damn men without their consent.

But even this election, while a sovereign act of God, is not unconditional, since those who are called may refuse to obey, or after they have answered the call to preach, may prove unfaithful, and die in their sins. How many have thus defeated God in their election to the high office of the ministry!

III. Another kind of election taught in the Scripture is that of the conditional election of persons to eternal life, through faith in Christ.

This kind of election involves final salvation, the end of it being eternal life, but it is not particular, but general, in that it embraces all of Adam's race, and is not absolute, but conditional, in that it is dependent upon personal faith in those elected, and results ultimately in
the salvation of those only who are faithful unto death. So that this election may be nullified by the unbelief and sin of men, and those chosen unto eternal life may be finally damned by their own act of disobedience.

This election may have two sides:

First: It is general, embracing all men. All men involved in the fall of Adam have been divinely chosen from the beginning unto salvation in Christ, through personal faith. None are left out, no one is passed by. Every man has a chance to be saved, so that if he is damned, it is his own fault, and not because he was not elected nor redeemed in Christ.

Secondly, a particular election may be admitted of this kind, viz., the election of every man whom God foresaw would voluntarily repent and believe, and the reprobation of those whom He foresaw would remain impenitent and unbelieving, this election being absolutely dependent upon faith foreseen, or unbelief foreknown.

Neither of these ideas of election is absolute nor unconditional, but hinges entirely upon the voluntary act of the creature. So that the burden of responsibility rests upon men, and not upon God in election.

As all men are involved involuntarily in the fall of Adam, so all men are redeemed in Christ, and under this provision of grace, all men are freely and sincerely offered salvation through faith. In the Divine purpose, therefore, all men are elected unto salvation conditionally. That is to say, He chooses all men alike unto eternal life through the abounding merits of Jesus Christ, the one Mediator and Redeemer, the remote end of this choice depending entirely upon the voluntary act of each man in accepting this Saviour. It remains after men have been elected, to make that election effectual and certain, since they must “give diligence to make their calling and election sure,” for it was not made sure when God elected them, but depends upon their own exertions.

All, therefore, who are fallen in Adam have been redeemed in Christ, have been predestinated, elected, chosen, to eternal life, and this unalterable decree has gone forth, which can never be changed, that “God hath not appointed us to wrath, but hath appointed us to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ.” Here is the ordainment of heaven, that all men shall be saved in Christ if they will, for “He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come unto repentance,” which could not be true if unconditional election was true.

God has sent forth the Divine decree, as fixed as the very throne of God, unalterable as God’s own word, unchangeable as God’s character, that “he that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned.” Neither men nor devils can change this conditional decree, which makes possible the salvation or damnation of every man. It has been predetermined that “whosoever will call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved,” and all the devils in hell cannot alter that decree. So that resting securely upon that predetermining act of God, we are warranted in going forth everywhere and declaring “Whosoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely.” Here is the hope of every poor sinner, the encouragement to every man fallen in Adam.
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This act of predestination will be seen, therefore, to differ entirely from that interpretation given to election by many people. It is worldwide in extent, and not particular, narrowed down to a certain number. It is conditional, and not absolute, for its ultimate success depends first upon voluntary repentance and faith; and secondly, upon final perseverance, according to the word, "He that endureth to the end shall be saved."

This election necessarily is conditioned upon man's free choice as to its ultimate results. So that men are not saved because they have been elected unto eternal life, but rather because they voluntarily accept God's act of election, and make that Divine act their own act. They consent to and ratify it by repentance and faith. They do not believe and repent because they have been unconditionally predestinated unto eternal life, but rather the end to which they have been predestinated is rendered certain by their own repentance, faith and perseverance.

We see, therefore, how God can be defeated in electing men to final salvation. "The purpose of God according to election" may be set aside by voluntary sin and unbelief, and men may perish in despair at last even after having been predestinated unto eternal life. Every lost soul in hell has only himself to blame. He is there in spite of having been redeemed in Christ, and in the face of the fact that he was divinely chosen unto eternal life, but he despised mercy, set aside God's elective act, and counted the blood of the atonement an unholy thing.

If there was no other reason to reject the unconditional election and reprobation of men, the deceitfulness of declaring that Jesus Christ tasted death for all men when He died for only the elect, the insincerity of offering salvation to all men, when it has been provided for only a particular number, and the injustice of damming certain men who never had an interest in the Saviour of sinners, and who could not believe in Him as their Saviour, is so apparent, that merely to state these things is sufficient to refute any such view of the acts of a loving and just God.

Considerable light is thrown upon Scriptural election by looking at political elections. The election of a man to an office is not absolute nor unconditional. After a candidate has been chosen by the suffrages of the people, he may refuse the office, decline to qualify, or may be ineligible. He may defeat the very act of the people who elected him. In Georgia several times lately it has been announced that tax collectors and tax receivers were about to lose the respective offices to which they had been chosen by ballot because they had failed to file their bonds in time with the Comptroller General of the State. They voluntarily neglected the required qualification till almost too late to secure the office with its perquisites.

So sinners, after having been chosen to eternal life through Jesus Christ, may defeat the Divine act of election, by refusing to qualify, and take the oath of allegiance to the King of Heaven. They may voluntarily refuse the gracious perquisites belonging to the position of a son of God.
Again: Even after a candidate has qualified for the office to which he has been chosen, he may so conduct himself as to lose the office, and be turned out of it. Thus he may nullify the act of election, defeat the suffrages of the people, and deprive himself of its benefits. Election in itself does not put one in office, but only gives him a right to it. He comes into the possession of the office after the election by voluntarily qualifying himself. The act of election is one thing—getting possession of the office quite another thing. Getting possession of the office is dependent upon compliance with certain conditions. And even after being inducted into the office, continuance therein is conditioned upon behaviour.

The same is true of Divine election. After the sinner has repented and believed, and thus far made his election of God to salvation effective, he may so conduct himself as to lose what he has gained, be turned out of office, and ultimately defeat the divine act which originally chose him to eternal salvation. That was the case of Judas, who lost his soul after he had been once elected by Divine favor. So also was it the case with King Saul.

Again: Men are elected to office, who decline the office after the election, and refuse to accept the honor, the labor, and the perquisites. Why then cannot it be true, even though God elects sinners to the exalted position of sons of God, that they may likewise decline the honor, despise the privilege, and reject the office?

In conclusion, let us ask some questions:

First, What is the evidence of having been elected to eternal life? Not personal faith or regeneration. This is but the acceptance of the act of Divine election, the consent to receive the high privileges of a child of God, and the voluntary qualification for the gracious things to which we have been chosen. The highest evidence we have been elected to eternal life is the revealed will of God. Only in this way do we know that we have been chosen in Christ unto holiness, happiness and heaven. Shut up the Word of God, or shut our eyes to its wonderful revelations of the Divine plans and purposes, and we know nothing of Divine election. We are absolutely in the dark as to the purpose of God in election. Opening it, we find there the glad information, which is the proof, that all men fallen in Adam have been chosen and redeemed in Christ.

Secondly, Why are any of Adam’s race damned? Certainly not because they have been reprobated or passed by in the provisions of the atonement. It is not because they have not been elected to eternal life. Far from it, for all men have been redeemed in Christ, and all of Adam’s race have been “chosen in Him, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.” Those fallen in Adam who are eternally damned, voluntarily reprobate themselves in spite of a universal atonement, in the face of world wide invitations to take the water of life freely, and even though they have been divinely elected unto eternal salvation. Sinners go down to hell over the blood of the atonement and directly in the face of the predestinating act of God, and
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thus defeat God in His gracious plans concerning their eternal destiny.

Thirdly, What is the difference between the saint and the sinner? Some would answer that one is elected while the other is not. But this is far from the truth, for all of Adam's fallen race have been conditionally elected to eternal salvation. “For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ.” This could not be true if God had willed to pass by a part of the race, and determined to save only a particular number. Herein is the real difference between the saint and the sinner: One has voluntarily accepted the fact of his election, and has qualified for those things to which he was chosen in Christ, while the other has rejected the things of God, and has nullified the Divine election. Under the atonement, all men have been elected to be kings and priests unto God, and to be sons of God. But men refuse the office to which they have been chosen in the mind of God, decline the privileges of election, despise its honors, turn from its rich heritage, and reject the priesthood and kingship of sons of God.

The ground of condemnation, therefore, cannot be that sinners have been passed by in the gracious provisions of salvation. To thus damn men would be the very height of injustice. But it is that “light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light.” The fault is not to be found in a gracious, loving, all-wise God, but in men themselves. “He that believeth not shall be damned.”

This then is the Scripture view of the doctrine of election, in perfect harmony with the Divine character, and in full accord with man’s free agency, placing the responsibility of accepting or rejecting Christ where it rightly belongs, upon the sinner, and making him reasonably and justly responsible for the salvation or the loss of his soul.

This view does not run counter to a plain, common sense view of God’s Word, nor put us where we must be continually twisting that Word to make it harmonize with reason and accord with Divine justice, love and mercy. Such a view runs parallel with the whole trend of Scripture. All difficult passages bearing upon predestination and election can be easily explained with this theory, while the opposite view is contradictory, unreasonable and impossible to reconcile with other plain Scriptures.

Moreover, this view of election vindicates the Divine character, and places the responsibility for sin where it rightfully belongs—not upon God, but upon men.
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