

For the convenience of friends in the country, three copies will be forwarded, post free, on receipt of three stamps, to be forwarded to Mr. E. Butt, 3, Denmark Terrace, Cold Harbour Lane, Camberwell; or friends wishing them sent weekly will please direct as above.

# Surrey Tabernacle Pulpit.

LIBERALITY OF ELECTION.

## A SERMON

PREACHED ON SUNDAY MORNING, 10TH MARCH, 1867, BY

MR. JAMES WELLS,

AT THE NEW SURREY TABERNACLE, WANSEY STREET.

“Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect?”—Romans viii. 33.

In addition to what was advanced last Lord’s day morning upon these words, there are two more forms in which eternal election appears, upon which I wish this morning to dwell. The first is, *the liberality of election*. The second is, that *neither the gospel nor the people of God can be scripturally defended without election*.

First, *the liberality of election*. The Saviour saith, “Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out.” Now, seeing that he embodies in himself every gospel truth, we must look at those words as representing every truth of the gospel. Therefore the language of election is, “Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out.” But I shall try to work that thought out that I merely hinted at last Lord’s day morning,—to show up the liberality of election; that it stands in precisely the same form of encouragement to coming sinners, to seeking sinners, as doth the atonement of Jesus Christ; and that when election is rightly understood, it will become a mighty reason why we should come to God; it will become a mighty reason why we should come boldly to the throne of grace, there to obtain mercy and to find grace to help us in our time of need. Let us, then, look at it in this light. Let us take up some of those characters that hated this truth, being blind to it; for we can get at things sometimes the better by contrast. The language of election then is, “Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out.” Take Cain and Abel—chiefly Cain. Cain sought God; there is no doubt about this, for he brought the fruits of the ground and offered them to God. But at the same time Cain was not convinced of what sin really was, nor the kind of atonement which sin needed. He was not convinced of the majesty, of the justice, or of the holiness of God. He therefore thought that the question of sin between him and God could be easily settled by a little creature doing. Had his eyes been opened to see what sin was, and to see what the holiness and justice of God were, and that nothing but that

which God had promised could meet the case,—namely, the seed of the woman bruising the serpent's head,—what would have been the consequence? The consequence would have been that he would have sought to be saved after God's own order; he would have seen that that atonement was perfect; he would have seen that that atonement eternally saved all for whom it was made. And in that light he would have seen that there was a people given to this Promised Seed, that there was a people blessed and given eternally to him, and that in no other way could they come into his hands, in no other way could sinners be made heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ. Then Cain would have said, Well, then, awful as sin is, terrible as my condition is, as election hath given into the hands of this Promised Seed a number that no man can number, as it is grace that gave sinners to Christ,—an act of sovereign, infinite, and eternal love, irrespective of any good or bad in the creature, “the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth.” Cain would have said, What is to hinder me? Why, what is the language of this same gospel, this election? “Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out.” I will therefore take my acquaintance with the atonement as an evidence of my eternal election; I will take my sight and sense of my need of this way of mercy as an evidence of my election; I will take my renunciation of all confidence in the flesh, and that my hope shall be in God alone after this order,—I will take this as an evidence of my election. And as it is thus so entirely of grace, he would have said, if my sins were ten million times more than they are—yea, for aught I know, some of the antediluvians were called at a very advanced age, perhaps at the age of seven or eight or nine hundred years, and perhaps had lived as badly, pretty well, or quite, as Manasseh did; and yet these accumulated sins, when they once saw that it was electing grace that gave the sinner to Christ, and that in his atonement there is plenteous redemption—why, such would say, This electing grace is the very reason I should look to God; it is the very reason I should come. But take away that electing grace, and let the atonement be presented thus,—There is an atonement for you if you, when you come and rest upon it, will daily do your part; if you will perform such and such conditions; then your interest in that atonement will be kept good: a sinner that knows and feels what he is would feel that such a gospel would be no use to him. But when he sees that all is settled, from first to last, all is well ordered, that the whole of it depends entirely upon the Lord, what is the consequence? Why, the consequence is that he has unbounded confidence in God. And, some of you, you doubt and fear a great deal from a want of a clear understanding of your evidences of interest in election; but the great question for you to ask yourselves is, are you brought to see eternal election in Jesus Christ? for he is the light in which we are to see eternal election; the choice is in him, it consisteth in giving you to him, in constituting you eternally one with him; and, as I have before said, its language is, “Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out.” What is there illiberal here? If all the population of

the globe to-day were to see their lost condition, and be led to acknowledge that nothing but this order of things could save them, this everlasting covenant (for the gospel of God is an everlasting gospel), ordered in all things and sure; and in it that gospel is all our salvation and all our desire, even when he doth not make it to grow; why, if the whole population of the globe were to-day awakened to see their condition, and their need of this gospel, and the suitability of this gospel, would election be a hindrance? Why, if my voice could reach them all, I would say, See how suited it is to you. Ah, but there is an elect, and we fear we are not the elect. But your being enlightened to see your need as laid down in the Scriptures is a proof that you are the elect; and your desire for the grace of God is a proof that you are interested in that grace; and all your other hopes and confidences being destroyed, and your having no hope but in the boundless grace of God after this order of things, is laid down in the holy Scriptures as a proof that you are God's elect, if you see this order of things so as to believe it, and to love God thereby; for "if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost;" and if it be not hidden from us, but so revealed as to win our affections, it is a proof of our eternal election. I should be in black despair to-day—yea, years and years ago—were it not for election; and that will come out more clearly, perhaps, presently.

Then I go on a little farther, and I come to Esau. Did election shut Cain out from God? No; his own sin kept him where he was. Did election shut Esau out? No; Esau's own blindness, his own sin, his own enmity kept him from God. Election took Jacob in, but election did not cast Esau out—no, Esau was just where he would have been if there had been no such thing in existence as electing grace. Esau was just where he would have been if the Lord had not done what he did; that is, suppose the Lord had loved no one, Esau would have been just where he was. Suppose Esau had seen the value of the priesthood, which was his birthright, and had seen that which Abraham saw in Melchizedek—the eternity of Christ's priesthood—Esau then would have seen an infinity of value in this priesthood, an eternity of value in this priesthood, and he would have fallen in with eternal election; and had that been his lot, election would have received him. So, then, those of us who are enlightened to see an infinity and an eternity of value in the priesthood of Christ, if our enlightenment is associated with love to God in this matter, not being a mere enlightenment without anything else; but if it be associated with love to God in this matter, consecration to God, and earnest decision for him—then it stands an evidence of our eternal election; for, "This is the will of him that sent me; that every one that seeth the Son, and believeth on him,"—with that faith that worketh by love—"should have everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day." So, then, do not make light of seeing in the Bible the great doctrine of eternal election, but turn it into a reason why you should trust in God; turn it into a reason why you should doubt and fear the less; turn it into a reason why you should love and glorify God the more. Now Esau sold his birthright, and afterwards, when he would

have inherited the blessing, he was rejected, though he sought it carefully with tears.

At the risk of being a little tedious, I must be careful here, because every one feels that that is a very solemn scripture. Let us try clearly to understand it; for the good ground-hearer is the man that understands what he hears, and consequently savingly profits thereby. Esau is made the representative of a certain class of professors, who despise that which is the Christian's birthright; and then afterwards, when these professors would inherit the blessing; they are rejected, and find no place of repentance, though they seek it carefully with tears. Now let us see if we can find out what kind of professors these are, and whether we are a part of them, or whether the Lord in his mercy hath delivered us from such.

The matter stands thus. What is the Christian's birthright? Let us find that out; then I think we shall get at the character that despises the birthright; and that the time comes when that same character would be glad to have the blessing, but he will be rejected; let him seek it as earnestly as he may, he will be rejected; there is no remedy, there is no help, there is no hope; there is nothing—no, nothing—but certain, eternal perdition. The birthright of the Christian is this,—to be blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus before the world was. Here is the birthright of the Christian. If you doubt it, read the next verse: "He hath predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself;" while the great end of this election is that we should at the last be presented by the blessings so bestowed, and by this adoption into oneness with the Saviour that we should at the last be presented in a perfection of holiness, and righteousness, and love, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love. Now mind, not chosen *because* you were holy, but chosen to be, by the blessings of that election, made holy; chosen, not because you were blameless, but by the righteousness of Jesus Christ to be made blameless; chosen, not because you were friends, for you were enemies, but in order to make you friends, that you might be holy and without blame before him in love. The Christian's birthright, furthermore, is described in the 1st chapter of the First Epistle of Peter: "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father," and so it goes on. Saith one, Ah, that eternal election, I despise it! And yet you cannot have one spiritual blessing without it. I will again quote the words: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that hath blessed us with *all* spiritual blessings." Let the emphasis rest upon the word *all*. Not one spiritual blessing without eternal election. And the Apostle Peter, in his 1st chapter, when he views the people as elect by the infinite foreknowledge of the great God, he then sees, in inseparable connection with that, an inheritance that can never fade away, and their infallible preservation to it. Ah, says the mere professor, the man whose religion is of the flesh, who is born after the flesh as to his religion; converted mentally and morally, but not vitally and spiritually;—I hate this eternal election, and the blessings according thereto; I hate this elect according to the foreknowledge of God; I hate the doctrine of the inheritance being sure, and the people preserved unto it infallibly. Well, but that is the Christian's birthright. Well, I despise all that. Very well. Presently, as sure as you are a living man, dying in that state, you will lift up your eyes in hell, and you will see the chosen Abraham afar off, you will see the chosen Lazarus afar off in Abraham's bosom, and Abraham in Christ's bosom, and Christ in the Father's bosom, and so all embraced in the bosom of infinite, eternal, and immutable love. And ah! how gladly would you be one of those elect! how gladly would you now inherit the blessing! how gladly would you now have even a drop of water to cool your burning tongue! Ah, you will say, fool that I was! This is that

which I despised; but now I am in hell, and now I would inherit the blessing; I may seek it carefully with tears (if there be such things in hell as tears) yet I shall be rejected. The gulf is fixed; my soul is doomed; I am lost for ever. Thus Esau, "for one morsel of meat sold his birthright;" and so the mere professor, for the sake of the world, a little morsel of worldly applause, worldly respectability, and worldly advantage, he would not be one of those despised people, for they are nowhere spoken well of. As some of the papers said some time ago, "As to that Wells and Foreman, they are respected by nobody; they are merely tolerated!" Well, I would rather have a few bitter herbs than nothing. And therefore the mere professor dreads being one of these. The birthright of Esau was the priesthood. That priesthood was a type of the eternal priesthood of Christ, a figure of the eternal perfection and triumph of the people by Christ Jesus. This Esau easily parted with; this he despised; but the time came when he would have inherited the blessing. So it will be with us, if we are despisers of the Christian's birthright. Whereas, if we are lovers of the Christian's birthright, Ah! we shall say, what a happy thing thus to believe in Christ aright, after the due order! for unto such he giveth power to become the sons of God. Those people, then, who have no wish to come to election, who make light of it, and despitefully use those that do stand out for it, these are, on the ground of their profession, called; but they will not prove at the last to be chosen. Those that election received before time shall be led to receive election while time is; not that heaven ever was their birthright in *reality*, but only *seemingly*. As they professed to be elected, so that is taken from them which they *seemed* to have.

Is one here saying, Well, in times past I have despised that doctrine; I have spoken against it, and I have joined with those that have spoken against it, and I have hated it; but now I see and feel my need of it; but having despised this blessedness—for I did not know then it was a blessedness, and that all spiritual blessings are by this sovereign pleasure of the blessed God—I am afraid I am an Esau. No, you are not. The true antitypical Esau will never seek the blessing till he gets into hell, because he will not know his need of it. What one gospel truth was there that Saul of Tarsus did not despise and persecute? But when grace set in, opened his eyes, discovered to him his sinnership, did election say, Well, now, Saul, you despised me, and now I shall despise you? Did the atonement say, Now, Saul, you despised me, and now I shall despise you? And did the gospel say, Now, Saul, you have despised me, and I shall despise you? No. A change is wrought; he is no longer a despiser, he is no longer blind, he is no longer an enemy; now it is, "Brother Saul, the God of our fathers"—the change that is wrought proves it—"hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know his will"—his good, his new covenant will;—"that thou shouldest see that Just One, and hear the voice of his mouth." As these words brought heaven, salvation, peace, and liberty into the soul of Saul, he thus conferred, not with flesh and blood, but went at once and "told to sinners round what a wondrous Saviour he had found." See, then, the liberality of election—the reason why you should come to God. I tell every one of you that not a soul under the heavens could be saved in any other way; and if the Lord had undertaken to have saved the whole human race, all must have been saved in the same way. Election, saith one, what is that? My minister tells me I must not trouble myself about election. Yes, do. You do as the Bereans did—they searched the Scriptures daily, to show their earnestness, whether these things were so. And if the Lord should enlighten your mind, and give you to see that eternal election is a doctrine of the Bible, you will be led to see that not a soul can be saved without it; you will be led to see that if you live and die an enemy to it it will be a black mark against you; and you will be led



to see that if you are saved it must be after that order of things. So let us be aware of putting reformation into the place of regeneration; let us be aware of putting mere mental and moral conversions into the place of vital and spiritual conversions. But we know that as all spiritual blessings are bestowed according to election, so everything that accompanies salvation is of God. Faith is the gift of God. And I say this, that you must be convinced of your need of eternal election, and of all blessings being bestowed upon you in Christ according to eternal election. Not one Wesleyan is convinced (and, mind, I am not judging men—I am judging principles,—not one Wesleyan is convinced of his need of Christ making such an atonement as should carry out with infallible certainty the purpose of election. The purpose of election I have already noticed, but I will just repeat it, for the sake of showing that where the Holy Spirit is the teacher you will see, sooner or later, your need of election; you will see your need of Christ's atonement being that which shall carry out with infallible certainty the purpose of election. The purpose of that election, then, is "that we should be holy;" and answering to that purpose the Saviour's one offering cleanseth us from all sin for ever; that carries that out, "and without blame;" and he has brought in everlasting righteousness; that carries that out; "before him,"—that is, that we should be in the presence of God, and so he hath redeemed us to God; he himself is gone into the presence of God, that where he is, there we may be also. So that this atonement is to bring us into the presence of God, and we are to be there in a state of perfect love to God; that is, a state of perfect reconciliation to God. Now, then, unless you are thus convinced of your need of eternal election; unless you are thus convinced of the atonement of Jesus Christ being that which shall carry out with infallible and eternal certainty these magnificent and wondrous purposes of eternal election—unless you are thus convinced, there is something seriously lacking in your religion. There may be grace in your heart, but there is something seriously lacking. Well, but if I get to heaven, never mind. Do not talk so; do not trifle with your soul; do not trifle with God; do not trifle with the Saviour; do not trifle with eternal things. Is it not infinitely better to be right than to be wrong? Can we be too right with God? Can we know too much of his will, of his mind, of his counsels, and of his settlements? So, then, the language of the great truth of eternal election is, "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." And while Esau professors despise the Christian's true birthright, the time will come, if grace prevent not, when they will lift up their eyes in hell, and then would gladly inherit the blessing; but they will be rejected, though they seek it with all the earnestness of the man you read of in hell.

But your time, I regret to see, is going on faster than I am. I must therefore now come to the second point—namely, that *neither the gospel nor the people of God can be scripturally defended without election*. For every spiritual blessing being bestowed according to eternal election, this lays the axe so completely at the root of all human invention that there is not a single ceremony or invention we need. None of the Old Testament saints ever attempted to make the appointed ceremonies, and sacrifices, and services, of that dispensation any part of their salvation. Abraham could distinguish between the two covenants, as shown in the 12th of Genesis. David could distinguish between the ceremonial and typical covenant, and that eternal covenant in Christ wherein lay all his eternal welfare. And hence it is that a State Church is perfectly unscriptural. Now the gospel is complete in itself, and the people are complete in Christ. Eternal election shows the eternal salvation of the sinner to be so entirely of God that there is no room for any human invention. Some good people, to my astonishment, hold the doctrine that the Church of England is a bulwark against Popery—why, it is becoming a den of Popery instead of a bulwark against it—and that it is a bulwark in

defence of our liberties! Now, I think two or three minutes consideration will rend that misty veil of delusion from your minds. Suppose we are interrupted, as I have been twice in my time, in public in our places of worship, where do we go to for protection? To the Church of England? No; but to the common law of the land. Suppose we had no State Church (and I wish we had not)—suppose we had none; what a relief it would be to the Government; what a relief it would be to the Queen; and I am sure the bishops would be relieved, for they would get rid of all their political cares and troubles, and they would have nothing to do then but preach the gospel. Well, suppose we had no State Church, what would then be the business of the civil law of the land? Why, to protect all—Catholics, Puseyites, high doctrine, low doctrine, no doctrine;—that is my sentiment—to protect all. And if a Catholic interrupted me in that case, what should I do? I should either give him into custody, or summons him, according to the common law of the land; and then the common law of the land would deal with him, not because he is a Catholic, but because he has interfered with my rights as a citizen of the land. And if I interfere with a Catholic, the common law of the land would put me to rights; not because I am a high doctrine or a low doctrine man, but because I have infringed upon the rights of another. So that if we had no State Church at all, the civil law would have nothing to do but protect the whole. Besides, Catholicism, if we overcome that, it must be by the light and brightness of God's word, not by carnal weapons. Church of Englandism as a system is of man, entirely of man. Here is the parish Puseyite—see how the poor man is deluded. He says, I am your parish minister. And pray who made you so? The bishop. And who made the bishop a bishop? God. That I do not believe in. I believe Parliament are not led by the Lord when they attempt to make creeds, and prayers, and laws, and doctrines, for Jesus Christ and his family. I believe God has provided for his family in his word all the creeds and all the prayers—everything they need. The ceremony of sprinkling an infant has no more to do with the salvation of the soul than sprinkling a gate post. Their confirmation is the veriest rubbish that ever existed. Their godfathers and godmothers—why, it is all trash, the whole of it, from first to last. Where do we want it? Bring in eternal election—if I have the living God here, blessing me with all spiritual blessings, I do not need anything else, I will not have anything else; I despise the whole, I pour contempt upon the whole. So, then, if we had no State Church we should have better protection than we have now. It cuts the whole of it up. And how such men as Romaine, and Hawker, and Toplady could stay in such a system I cannot make out. They knew they derived their temporal standing from Acts of Parliament; but those good men in the church knew they derived everything that was spiritual from eternal election. That is the root, that is the source whence everything flows. So, then, you cannot defend the gospel nor the people of God scripturally without election. Bring that in; why, I don't want man's blessing—I don't want your blessing, sir; I have got all I need; everything is complete already. There is nothing cuts up delusion so much as this. Well, then, says one, after all, is there any harm in Church-of-Englandism and Romanism? It is all religious. Shall I tell you, in conclusion, what the Lord says about it? I will. Go to the 8th chapter of Ezekiel,—and there was an image, and there were portrayed upon the walls of the temple the likenesses of creeping things, and abominable beasts, and all the idols of the house of Israel; and there were men made priests, and there were hired mourners—sisters of mercy,—solemn—so solemn they would not let the light of the sun come into where they performed their services much, lest it should take away from the solemnity. Let the windows be narrow, let everything be dark and dull; for we are a wonderfully pious people. Ezekiel's attention was

called to it. Hear it, all of you. While they thought they were a holy people, while they thought their doings were so pleasing in the sight of God, like the Pharisees in the Saviour's day,—“Son of man, seest thou what they do here? even the great abominations that the house of Israel commit here?” Now hear me, all of you. Wherein lay the wickedness of these ceremonies? Wherein lay the greatness of these abominations? Upon what rested God's determined vengeance against the whole? It laid in two things—the wickedness of those ceremonies, those human inventions, the greatness of the abomination, laid in two things. First, in deceiving the souls of men. Can anything be more wicked than to lead an immortal soul to hell under the profession of leading him to heaven? Can there be a greater abomination than that deception that takes hold of your never-dying soul, wraps you up in universal delusion, and presently, when you come to die in the confidence of these ceremonies, your immortal soul drops into hell? Can anything be a greater abomination than this deception? can anything be more wicked, can anything be more awful? God himself always has shown, and always will show, his vengeance against such. And what is the other point in which the wickedness lay? By these human laws they inspired men with a deadly enmity to the people of God. Hence you read of their shedding blood. The poor people of God had no chance. See how they sought the life of Jeremiah; see how they sought the life of Ezekiel, and would have cut him off if they could. Just so now. Romanism and Puseyism contain all the satanic malice that would deluge our favoured land with blood if they could. But take away all these false systems, and let eternal election come in, let God be all in all; then the people that are believers walk together as brethren. Now see how the Lord takes care of his own. “Set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done; and come not near any man upon whom is the mark,”—the mark of distinction from human religion, the mark that shows they are decided for God in his covenant, in his order of things. And what was the mark he set upon them? You will find it in the 28th of Exodus. Upon the forefront, of the mitre on the forehead of the priest were to be the words, “Holiness to the Lord;” and the priest was to present the people as consecrated by the atonement, “holiness to the Lord.” Therefore, my mark is faith in Christ as my eternal perfection, faith in him by whom I am holiness to the Lord. He is holiness to the Lord for me, and then my faith in him makes me holiness to the Lord by him. His work has destroyed my sinnership, established me in saintship; and that is the mark set upon all the saints—“Holiness to the Lord” by faith in Christ; purifying their hearts by faith.

Thus, then, all human inventions are wicked abominations; Church-of-Englandism is a wicked invention, and the nation would be better without it than with it. All human *isms* in these matters are wicked inventions, because they deceive the souls of men, insult the God of heaven, inspire hatred to the truth, and consequently to the people of God.

May the Lord lead us into those dear and blessed truths, and may we go on, bold as lions, fearing neither the frowns nor courting the smiles of any, but looking forward to the happy time when we shall meet with the people of God in all the bliss of the great purposes of eternal election.