

GORE CHARLES

ST. PAUL'S EPISTLE TO
THE ROMANS: A
PRACTICAL EXPOSITION.
VOL. II

Charles Gore

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A Practical Exposition. Vol. II**

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PREFACE

There would be no need for a preface to this second volume were it not that a very kindly and careful review of the first volume in *The Guardian* of May 24 last, requires a word of notice. The reviewer warns me off 'the dialogue system of exegesis.' Now no doubt this principle, like every other, may be abused. 'The Jewish objector' may, as the reviewer complains, be allowed to 'run riot.' Still I cannot doubt that the Jewish objector is a reality of an illuminative kind in the argument of such passages as Romans iii. 1-8, or the great passage (ix-xi), to which the first part of this volume is devoted. Of the other points of detail noticed by the reviewer – which a volume of this kind is not the place to discuss – many are confessedly doubtful, and some unimportant. On most of them I am still disposed to retain my former opinion, but I would, in accordance with my critic's wishes, alter 'the actual life' (vol. i. p. 203) into 'the principle of life,' and (p. 213) instead of saying that the principle of living by dying 'belongs only to a fallen world' say that 'it belongs, *as St. Paul views it, though probably not in its ultimate law*, to a fallen world.' I agree that in its deepest sense the principle appears to be an ultimate law of all created life of which the conditions are known to us.

C. G.

WESTMINSTER ABBEY,
Conversion of St. Paul, 1900.

THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS

DIVISION IV. CHAPTERS IX-XI.

The theodicy or justification of God for His dealings with the Jews

St. Paul has concluded his great exposition of the meaning of 'the gospel': that in it is the disclosure of a divine righteousness into which all mankind – Jews and Gentiles on the same level of need and sin – are to be freely admitted by simply believing in Jesus. The believer in Jesus first welcomes the absolute and unmerited forgiveness of his sins, which his redeemer has won for him, and thus acquitted passes into the spiritual strength and joy and fellowship of the new life, the life of the redeemed humanity, lived in Jesus Christ, the second Adam or head of our race. The contemplation of the present moral freedom, and the glorious future prospect, of this catholic body – the elect of God in Jesus Christ – has in the eighth chapter filled the apostle's language with the glow of an enthusiasm almost unparalleled in all the compass of his epistles. And he is intending to pass on to interpret to the representatives of this church of Christ at Rome some of the moral obligations which follow most clearly from the consideration of what their faith really means. This ethical division of the epistle begins with chapter xii. The interval (ix-xi) is occupied with a discussion which is an episode, in the sense that the epistle might be read without it and no feeling of a broken unity would force itself upon us. None the less the discussion not only confronts and silences an obvious objection to St. Paul's teaching, but also brings out ideas about the meaning of the divine election, and the responsibility involved in it, which are vital and necessary for the true understanding of the 'free grace of God.' For these chapters serve really to safeguard the all-important sense of our human responsibility under the rich and unmerited conditions of divine privilege in which we find ourselves.

St. Paul's argument so far has involved an obvious conclusion. God's elect are no longer the Jews in particular. On the contrary, the Jews in bulk have lost their position and become apostates in rejecting the Christ. This result in the first place cuts St. Paul to the heart, for his religious patriotism was peculiarly intense. But in the second place it furnishes an objection in the mouth of the Jew against St. Paul's whole message. For if God had really rejected His chosen people, He had broken His word in so doing. God had pledged Himself to Israel: the Old Testament scriptures were full of passages which might be quoted to this effect. Thus —

'My mercy will I not utterly take from David
'Nor suffer my faithfulness to fail.
'My covenant will I not break,
'Nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips.
'Once have I sworn by my holiness;
'I will not lie unto David;
'His seed shall endure for ever,
'And his throne as the sun before me.
'It shall be established for ever as the moon,
'And as the faithful witness in the sky¹.'

But according to St. Paul's teaching, had not God 'broken His covenant'? What had become of the 'faithful witness'? To this objection, then, St. Paul sets himself to reply. The chapters we are

¹ Ps. lxxxix. 33-7.

now to consider may be best represented as an animated defence of his teaching directed toward a Jew who pleads this objection. St. Paul, no doubt, had heard too much of it since he began to preach the gospel, and had felt it too deeply in his own mind in the earlier days, when the word of Jesus was as a goad against which he was kicking, for it to be possible for him to pass it by. And his defence – his 'theodicy' or justification of God – is in brief this: God never committed Himself or tied Himself to Israel physically understood. He always kept hanging over their heads declarations of His own freedom in choosing His instruments, and warnings of possible rejection, such as ought to have prevented their resting satisfied with merely having 'Abraham to their father' (ix). And if the question be asked: Why has Israel been rejected? The answer is: That so far as actual Israel has fallen out of the elect body, it is because they refused to exhibit the correspondence of faith (x); but also Israel, as such, has not been rejected; for, as of old, so now there is a faithful remnant. Nor again is the partial alienation of Israel which has occurred final. God is simply waiting for their recovery of faith, to restore them to their ancient and inalienable position of election. Meanwhile He uses their temporary alienation as the opportunity of the Gentiles, who in their turn can only retain their newly won position by maintaining the correspondence of faith with the purposes of God, and who also wait for their fulfilment and the perfecting of their joy upon the recovery of Israel as a body. Thus through all stages of election and rejection – by both methods of mercy and of judgement – God, in His inscrutable wisdom, works steadily for the opportunity of showing His mercy upon all men.

When we have a brief analysis of the argument of these chapters under our eyes, we may well rub them in astonishment, and look again, and ask why, in the reaction against Calvinism², we had come (to put it frankly) to dislike these chapters so much. We know that as a fact these chapters have been taken as a stronghold of the Calvinistic position by both its friends and foes. They have come to constitute in modern literature a sort of reproach upon Christianity³, just on the ground on which the best Christian conscience of our time is most sensitive. Many of us would have to admit that we have shrunk from these chapters as we have heard them read, and probably avoided them in our own reading. We have shrunk from the sound of the words – 'the children being not yet born, neither having done anything good or bad, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works but of him that calleth' – 'Jacob have I loved, and Esau have I hated' – 'Whom he will he hardeneth' – 'Hath not the potter power over the clay.' Yet these texts, with their arbitrary, unfair and narrow sound, appear as steps in an argument which has for its conclusion the most universal conception possible of the purpose of the divine love. 'God shut up all unto disobedience, that he might have mercy upon all.' The conclusion of the argument is so unmistakable, and so plain against any Calvinistic attribution to God of a narrow and arbitrary favouritism, that there must have been some great mistake in our understanding of its main point and drift. It is worth while then to indicate at starting where the error has lain.

1. It has been in part owing to our mistaken habit of taking isolated 'texts' out of their connexion, as if they were detached aphorisms. Now St. John, in his meditative method, does very generally round off a fundamental Christian truth into an aphorism which really admits of being detached and quoted apart from its context. And no doubt there are in St. Paul detachable texts. But on the whole St. Paul, least of all men, admits of being judged by detached fragments. His thought is always in process. It looks before and after. He is seriously wronged by the mere fact of his epistles being divided into separate verses, and sometimes arbitrary chapters, as in the Authorized Version. Thus in the case of these three chapters, the common mistake as to the meaning of particular phrases could hardly have arisen if the argument had been kept in mind as a whole, and especially its conclusion as to the universal purpose of divine love – 'to have mercy upon all.'

² By this phrase is commonly meant the doctrine that God created some men absolutely and irresistibly predestined to eternal life and joy, and created the rest of mankind absolutely and hopelessly abandoned to eternal misery.

³ Matthew Arnold, *St. Paul and Protestantism* (Smith, Elder, 1870), p. 99, admits that St. Paul 'falls into Calvinism,' but patronizingly excuses him on the ground that this Calvinism is with him secondary, or even less than secondary.

2. For, among other things, the true meaning of 'election' in these chapters would then have been apparent. St. Paul has been popularly misunderstood to be referring to God's 'election' of some individual men to salvation in heaven, and His abandonment of the rest to hell. Whereas the argument as a whole and its conclusion make it quite certain that what he is speaking of is the election of men in nations or churches (only subordinately of individuals)⁴ to a position of special spiritual privilege and responsibility in this world, such as the Jews had formerly occupied, and the Christians were occupying now – an election to be the people of God, and bear His name in the face of the world – the sort of election which carries with it a great joy and a special opportunity, but not by any means a certainty of final personal acceptableness to God, apart from moral faithfulness. Apart from such faithfulness the 'children of the kingdom shall be cast into the outer darkness,' and the highest shall be put lowest, while the lowest are raised highest.

3. Another cause of misunderstanding has been forgetfulness of the point of view of the opponent with whom St. Paul is arguing. In modern times assertions of divine absoluteness, like St. Paul's, have been made by teachers who were refusing to recognize any such freedom of the will in the individual human being – any such power to control his own personal destiny – as seems to our common sense to be involved in moral responsibility in any real sense. St. Paul has therefore been supposed, like these more recent teachers, to be asserting divine absoluteness, or the unrestricted freedom of divine choice, as against human freedom, or in such a way as to destroy the idea of moral responsibility. But in fact St. Paul is vindicating moral responsibility. His opponent is the Jew, who holds that God had so tied His hands and lost His liberty in choosing Israel once for all for His elect people, that every child of Abraham can at all times claim the privileges of his election for no other reason than because of his genealogy. Such a doctrine of election does indeed destroy all real moral responsibility in the subject of it, and all freedom of moral choice in God. St. Paul, on the other hand, asserts that God remains free and absolute to elect and to reject, irrespective of all questions of race, where He will and as He will. The absolute reason of God's selections, the reason why certain races and individuals are chosen for special privileges and as special instruments of the divine purpose, lies in a region into which we cannot penetrate. But because God has shown us His moral character and requirement, we can know how, and how only, we may hope to retain any position which God has given us; it is by exhibiting moral correspondence with His purpose – that is faith – or malleability under His hand.

This is a doctrine then which lays upon 'the elect,' at any particular moment, the moral responsibility of correspondence with a divine purpose. In a word, St. Paul asserts divine sovereignty in such a sense as vindicates instead of destroying moral responsibility, while his opponent is claiming for Israel a sort of freedom from being interfered with, which would really destroy their moral responsibility altogether. Thus, as has already been pointed out⁵, nothing can well be more important than to keep clearly in mind, here as elsewhere, *with whom* St. Paul is arguing.

4. It is worth while remarking, before we apply ourselves to St. Paul's argument in detail, that it is essentially 'apologetic': it is a justification of God in view of certain felt difficulties: and it is an argument *ad hominem*, that is an argument with certain people on their own assumptions, the sort of argument which takes the form of saying, 'you at least have no right on your own principles to urge such and such difficulties.' Now we are bound to recognize how very important at all periods this *ad hominem* appeal is: how very important it is to get men to see what their own principles really

⁴ Of course the election of the nation or the church is felt, especially in the New Testament, or whenever in the Old Testament individuality is fully realized, to involve the election of each of the persons composing the nation or the church. But still their election is a challenge to their faith, and no guarantee of ultimate salvation. St. Paul is left praying and suffering 'for the elect's sake that they also may obtain the salvation ... with eternal glory' (2 Tim. ii. 10). The elect have to 'make their calling and election sure' (2 Peter i. 10). It should, however, be noticed that election may be, and in the Gospels is, used to describe the final selection of those who are proved worthy of the 'marriage supper of the Lamb.' (Matt. xxii. 14.)

⁵ Vol. i. pp. 114 f.

involve. A great part of the evil of the world comes through people not thinking out what they really mean and believe. But on the other hand, this sort of argument, which proceeds upon a certain set of assumptions, has often a merely temporary force, and carries with it an accompanying danger. When the state of mind contemplated becomes a matter of history, the argument based on its assumption has lost its power. In view of a quite different set of assumptions it may become even misleading. For example, Bishop Butler argued for the truths of natural and revealed religion, on the analogy of the facts of nature and on the assumption of a divine author of nature, thus – If, as you admit, God made nature, and yet nature is shown to contain such and such facts or processes, how can you argue against the divine authorship of natural religion and revelation on the ground that it attributes to God similar facts and processes? This was a very effective argument so long as men did treat the doctrine of God having created the world as a matter of course. But when 'agnosticism' arose – when men ceased to discover in nature any decisive argument for God or against God, and professed only an inability to draw any conclusion at all, Butler's argument had lost its force, and the difficulties in nature and religion to which he called attention could even be used against ascribing a divine authorship to either. Apologetic arguments are always liable to this peril. Thus St. Paul's arguments, based on an unhesitating belief that the Old Testament contained really the words of God, that what they asserted about God was certainly true, and that God was certainly just and the standard of justice, may have an effect very contrary to his intention when they are applied to people who feel no such certainties. St. Paul may seem to be making the difficulties of believing in the Bible only more obvious, by calling attention to its 'harsh and unedifying' elements.

But this unfortunate result of most 'apologies' is, at least in the case of St. Paul and Bishop Butler, only superficial. If the apologetic argument is really deep, it retains, if not exactly its original value, yet a value not the less real. Butler's indications of the profound analogy which holds between the doctrines of religion and the facts of nature, can never be out of place or lose force. Still less can men ever cease to learn the deepest lessons from his temper of mind and method. And that it is so with St. Paul's apology – that it contains the profoundest and most abiding lessons about the responsibility and danger of all elect bodies and individuals – will appear plainly enough in what follows, now that we are in a position to approach his argument in detail.

DIVISION IV. § 1. CHAPTER IX. 1-13.

The present rejection of Israelites no breach of a divine promise

St. Paul has finished his glowing description of the position and prospects of the elect people of God. And then, by contrast, the misery of the outcast people once called elect – his own people – wrings his heart with pain. The very idea that in his new enthusiasm for the catholic church he can be supposed to be forgetting those who are of his own flesh and blood, stirs him to a profound protest. He solemnly asseverates that the pain which Israel's rejection causes him is acute and continuous. He has caught himself at the point of praying to be himself an outcast from Christ, if so be he could bring the people of his own kindred and blood into the Church. For who indeed could seem to have so good a title to be there? They are the Israelites – that is God's own people: the eye of God was so specially upon this race that He redeemed it and made it His own son⁶: to them was vouchsafed the shining of His continual presence in the tabernacle⁷: to them, in the persons of the patriarchs and of Moses, God gave special covenants, that is to say, pledged His word to them in an unmistakable manner and repeatedly that He should be their God and they should be His people: thus in pursuance of a divine purpose they were brought under the education of the divinely given law and ritual worship: and all this with direct and repeated promises of a more glorious position in the future to be brought about by the divine king, the Christ who was to be. To them finally belongs all the sanctity which can attach to a people from having numbered among its members the holy ones of God: for of this race were the patriarchs, the friends of God; and of this race, so far as human birth is concerned, came in fact the Christ who, born a Jew, is sovereign of the universe and ever blessed God. Surely then, St. Paul implies, that this race, now that the Christ they were expecting is at last come, now that the goal of all God's dealings with them is at last reached, should have fallen outside the circle of His people and be no longer sharers in the sonship or the election, would seem a result too monstrous to contemplate. The contrast between what they were and were intended for, and what in present appearance they are, is indeed appalling.

Yet the natural conclusion for the Jew to draw, which at this point flashes into St. Paul's mind, the conclusion that God has proved unfaithful, is not the true one. No: God's word, God's promise, has not broken down. For, if the facts are looked at, it appears quite plainly that the Israel of God was never simply the Israel of physical descent, nor the children of Abraham simply his physical seed. Plainly not. For Isaac and Ishmael were equally Abraham's seed, physically considered, but for the purpose of God the promise is given only to the family of the younger son, Isaac (Gen. xxi. 12), who moreover was born, not in the mere natural order, but under circumstances of special divine promise and intervention (Gen. xviii. 10). And if in this case it be said that the younger son Isaac was the only son of Sarah, the wife and free woman, and therefore had a natural prerogative over Ishmael, yet the same inscrutable principle of selection is apparent in the next generation, in a case where there is no possible inequality of natural claim – in the case of the two sons born simultaneously to Isaac of the same mother. Prior to their birth, and prior therefore to any possible merit or demerit on their own part – so that God's absolute freedom of choice should appear quite conspicuously – the younger Jacob was deliberately preferred over the elder Esau (Gen. xxv. 23). And in fact this race of Esau, this Edom – though they were Israelites after the flesh – appear in history as something much worse than merely secondary to the true Israel; for God speaks by Malachi and declares that, whereas Israel is His beloved son, Esau, that is Edom, He has 'hated' (Mal. i. 3). No Israelite therefore who reads his scriptures (St. Paul would conclude) ought to have failed to perceive an inscrutable element in God's choice of his chosen people. He ought not to have felt in his own case, any more than in that

⁶ Exod. iv. 23; Hos. xi. 1.

⁷ Exod. xvi. 10.

of the first children of Abraham or Isaac, that he could be sure of membership in the people of God merely because of his physical descent.

I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience bearing witness with me in the Holy Ghost, that I have great sorrow and unceasing pain in my heart. For I could wish⁸ that I myself were anathema from Christ for my brethren's sake, my kinsmen according to the flesh: who are Israelites; whose is 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 is Christ as concerning the flesh, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen. But *it is* not as though the word of God hath come to nought. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: neither, because they are Abraham's seed, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, it is not the children of the flesh that are children of God; but the children of the promise are reckoned for a seed. For this is a word of promise, According to this season will I come, and Sarah shall have a son. And not only so; but Rebecca also having conceived by one, *even* by our father Isaac – for *the children* being not yet born, neither having done anything good or bad, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth, it was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. Even as it is written, Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.

1. St. Paul's earnest asseveration is very noticeable in form. It shows so much of his instinctive inward life. He lives 'in Christ,' who is light as well as life⁹, and to speak the truth is the very atmosphere of this new life¹⁰. As it comes natural to many people to say 'upon my word as a gentleman,' it comes natural to St. Paul to say, 'speaking as in Christ, who is the light.' And his natural conscience – that is the faculty of passing judgement on one's own actions, which in St. Paul's case bears witness to the truth of what he says by passing no censure on him – that too does not act of itself merely, but in the Spirit of the new life, the Holy Spirit of Christ, which inspires and ratifies the moral judgement, otherwise so liable to be degraded or perverted or silenced: his conscience bears witness with his word in the Holy Ghost. Here, then, is the whole secret of Christian truthfulness. The Christian is truthful because he lives and speaks in God, in Christ, in the Spirit.

As to St. Paul's half-expressed prayer ('I was praying,' he says, i.e. 'I caught myself praying'), it resembles that of Moses for his rebellious people¹¹. 'And now, O Lord, if thou wilt forgive their sin – ; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written.' But St. Paul's instinctive desire is not apparently like that of Moses, to perish with his people rather than be saved without them; but to offer himself for rejection with a view to their salvation. The prayer is, as St. Paul implies, an impossible prayer, but it expresses, as hardly anything else could, the intensity of his feeling. And such intensity of feeling was natural to the deep religious patriotism of a Jew.

We may illustrate St. Paul's feeling by comparing a fine expression of a more commonplace sorrow over the ruin of Israel from a period after the destruction of Jerusalem¹². 'Now therefore I will speak; touching man in general, thou knowest best; but touching thy people will I speak, for whose sake I am sorry; and for thine inheritance, for whose cause I mourn; and for Israel, for whom I am heavy; and for the seed of Jacob, for whose sake I am troubled.' 'Thou seest that our sanctuary is laid waste, our altar broken down, our temple destroyed; our psaltery is brought low, our song is put to silence, our rejoicing is at an end; the light of our candlestick is put out, the ark of our covenant is

⁸ Or 'pray' (marg.) literally 'I was praying.'

⁹ Cf. Eph. v. 8-14.

¹⁰ Cf. Col. iii. 9.

¹¹ Exod. xxxii. 32.

¹² 2 Esdr. viii. 15-16, x. 21-23. The latter passage is not spoken to God, but by one Jew to another.

spoiled, our holy things are defiled, and the name that is called upon us is profaned; our freemen are despitefully treated, our priests are burnt, our Levites are gone into captivity, our virgins are defiled, and our wives ravished; our righteous men carried away, our little ones betrayed, our young men are brought into bondage, and our strong men are become weak; and, what is more than all, the seal of Sion – for she hath now lost the seal of her honour, and is delivered into the hands of them that hate us.'

2. As we read St. Paul's enumeration of the glories of Israel, it is of course obvious for us to pursue the line of thought taught us elsewhere by St. Paul, and in the Epistle to the Hebrews; and to recognize how each element of the 'glory,' which belonged once to the Jewish 'ministration of condemnation,' belongs in deeper and fuller measure to the Christian 'ministration of the Spirit'¹³. Ours is the vocation of the chosen people; ours is the sonship to God; and the perpetual presence; and the security of divine covenant; ours is the divine law, and with it, what is much better, the Spirit for its accomplishment; ours is the corporate worship in spirit and in truth, the Church's eucharist; for us, too, are promises which the realization of those of the first covenant has made 'more sure'; ours finally is the communion of the saints from Abraham onward into the body of Christ. And in proportion therefore to the greatness of our privileges, even as compared with those of the older covenant, is the greatness of our responsibility; 'For I would not, brethren, have you ignorant¹⁴,' St. Paul would say; he would not have us fail to profit by the warnings of old days. And another voice warns us 'Of how much sorer punishment shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace¹⁵.'

3. There has been amongst critics, since Erasmus, much controversy over the clause, 'who is over all, God blessed for ever.' There is no doubt that it is translated most naturally, and most agreeably to the balance and movement of the sentence, if we attribute it to Christ, as above. But many critics, including some who were orthodox, have stumbled at the idea of St. Paul speaking of Christ straight out as 'over all, God blessed for ever.' Generally no doubt 'God' is used by St. Paul as a proper name of the Father. But Christ is continually recognized as possessing strictly divine attributes, and exercising strictly divine functions; and in all St. Paul's epistles, beginning with his earliest to the Thessalonians, He is God's Son, His own or proper Son¹⁶. His blood, as shed for our ransoming, is God's own blood, or (possibly) the blood of one who is 'His own'¹⁷. He subsisted eternally in the form, or essential attributes, of God, and in possession of equality with Him; and He possesses now, as glorified in humanity, the divine name of universal sovereignty, the object of universal worship¹⁸. Therefore He is in the strictest sense divine; and whatever or, I should say, whoever is essentially divine and proper to the being of God, can rightly be called God. For, indeed, there is nothing in the strict sense divine but God Himself. It was then merely a question of time when Christians would become sufficiently familiar with the new revelation of the threefold name to apply the word God to the Son and the Spirit as naturally as to the Father. And there is nothing really to surprise us in St. Paul here applying it to Christ¹⁹: nothing certainly to warrant us in doing violence to the sentence, in order to obviate the conclusion that he did so, by putting a full stop after 'flesh,' and then supposing an abrupt exclamation 'He who is over all is God blessed for ever²⁰!'

¹³ 2 Cor. iii. 8.

¹⁴ See 1 Cor. x. 1-13.

¹⁵ Heb. x. 29.

¹⁶ 1 Thess. i. 10; Rom. viii. 3.

¹⁷ Acts xx. 28.

¹⁸ Phil. ii. 6-11.

¹⁹ Without the article which makes it a proper name of the Father.

²⁰ R. V. margin². It does further violence to the Greek to translate as R. V. margin¹, 'He who is God over all is (be) blessed for ever.' I have nothing to add on the matter to S. and H. *in loc.*, especially p. 236.

Let it be recognized, then, that St. Paul here plainly speaks of Christ as 'over all,' i.e. in His glorified manhood, and also as 'God blessed for ever' – that is, as the one proper and eternal object of human praise; and that he speaks of Him again elsewhere²¹, as 'our great God and Saviour.' It was only because He was essentially and eternally 'God' that He could, in our manhood and as the reward of His human obedience, be exalted to divine sovereignty and be 'over all.'

4. In the rest of the section St. Paul is arguing with a Jew, who makes the claim that because of the divine covenant God is bound to the Israelites, and to all Israelites for ever. 'We have Abraham to our father,' and that is enough²². The higher prophetic spirit of the Old Testament had already realized that God's election of Israel was a challenge to her to prove herself worthy of an undeserved privilege²³, and that, though a faithful remnant would never fail, yet unfaithfulness in the bulk of the nation would bring destruction upon them and loss of God's favour²⁴. The prophetic spirit had realized also that God's servant Israel was not 'called' for his own selfish honour's sake, but was entrusted with a divine ministry to fulfil for all the nations of the earth²⁵. It is to this higher sense of what Israel's position meant, and the perils it involved, that John the Baptist and our Lord Himself had sought to recall the Jews. They must not 'think to say within themselves, They had Abraham for their Father; for God was able of the stones to raise up children unto Abraham.' For 'many should come from the east and the west, and sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of God, and the sons of the kingdom should be cast into the outer darkness²⁶.' But it is evident that this higher meaning of the doctrine of election had been forgotten by contemporary Judaism, and they would not be recalled to it. They refused to contemplate the spiritual risk of missing their vocation, or the universal purpose for which it was given. They chose to think that Israel, i.e. the actual Israelites in bulk, *must* remain God's elect; that the Christ, when He came, must come to exalt their race and nation: that they were bound to inherit the blessings of the world to come: that the divine government of the world existed for their sakes²⁷.

St. Paul, then, is here intending to vindicate the real meaning of election, in the sense in which it is bound up with the ethical character of God and carries with it a deepened feeling of responsibility in those who are the subjects of it. But his argument is directed, first of all, to one point only – to bringing the eyes of the Jews straight up to their own scriptures, and forcing them to see that *they* do not justify the idea of election purely by race. It is not all of a certain seed, but only part of it, that is chosen. There is nothing to hinder a great part of the race again becoming as Ishmael or as Edom by the side of Israel. Ultimately, no doubt, there are *two* points to be proved. First, that God's method of choosing an elect body to be His people in the world is inscrutable, so that we cannot produce or determine His election by any calculation, or by any real or supposed merits, of ours; secondly, that though we cannot create our vocation, we can retain it by moral correspondence or faith, and

²¹ Tit. ii. 13. This is probably the right rendering.

²² St. Matt. iii. 9.

²³ Great stress was laid by the prophets on the absence of any original merit or power in Israel, which caused the divine election; see Ezek. xvi, Deut. xxvi. 5.

²⁴ See especially Amos ix. 7-10: 'Are ye not as the children of the Ethiopians unto me, O children of Israel? saith the Lord. Have not I brought up Israel out of the land of Egypt, and the Philistines from Caphtor, and the Syrians from Kir? Behold, the eyes of the Lord God are upon the sinful kingdom, and I will destroy it from off the face of the earth; saving that I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob, saith the Lord. For, lo, I will command, and I will sift the house of Israel among all the nations, like as corn is sifted in a sieve, yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth. All the sinners of my people shall die by the sword, which say, The evil shall not overtake nor prevent us.'

²⁵ Gen. xii. 3; Isa. lxvi. 18; Zech. viii. 23, &c.

²⁶ Matt. viii. 11, 12.

²⁷ In Weber's *Jüdische Theologie* (Leipzig, 1897, formerly called *System der Altsynagog. Palästin. Theol. or Die Lehre des Talmud*), pp. 51 ff, there are striking illustrations from the Talmud of this fixed tendency of thought among the Jews. Thus 'there exists no clearer proof of the Talmudic conviction of the absolutely holy character of Israel than that in all the places of Scripture in which Israel is reprov'd and has evil attributed to it, the expression, "the haters of Israel," is substituted for Israel.' 'We read: Isaiah was punished, because he called Israel a people of unclean lips,' &c. Cf. S. and H., p. 249, and my *Ephesians*, p. 261.

by that only. But at present it is only the first point that is insisted upon – the absolute, inscrutable element in the divine choice. And that, we should notice, is a fact not merely of scriptural evidence but of common experience. Men are born to higher and lower positions of privilege and opportunity. They are born Jacobs or Esaus, in respect of moral, intellectual, religious, or physical endowment – with ten talents, or five, or two, or one; and God does not often give us so much as a glimpse of the reason why. All He does make clear to us is that the determination of human vocations, higher or lower, is in wiser hands than ours.

It is of course evident, as has already been said, that what St. Paul is speaking about is the election of men, and specially races or nations of men, to a position of *spiritual privilege in this world*. We know now, better than the Jews of the Old Covenant could know it, that behind all the apparent injustices and inequalities of this world lies the rectifying equity of God. St. Peter had come to believe that the divine mercy had rectified in the world beyond death the apparently rough and heavy handed judgement upon the rejected mass of mankind in the time of the Flood. That physical catastrophe at least was an instrument of mercy in disguise²⁸. St. Paul believed the same about all God's rejections, as well as elections, in this world. They served one universal purpose: 'That he might have mercy upon all²⁹.' But all the same here and now in this world God does work by means of enormous inequalities. There are Jacobs whom He plainly loves, upon whom He showers all His richest blessings, and Esau whom, to judge from present evidence, we should say He hates – whom He sets to live in hardest and most cramping surroundings. And no man can determine which lot he shall enjoy. That lies in the inscrutable selectiveness of God.

That there is no question at all about the eternal welfare of the individual Esau's soul – that the question is simply of the comparative status of Israel and Edom in this world – appears plainly in the passage of Malachi, which St. Paul quotes. And we must notice how unexpected an application St. Paul gives to this passage in a direction most unfamiliar to Jewish thought. For Edom was to the Jew the very type of all that was most hateful. He anticipated for the Edomites God's worst vengeance, as for Israel God's best blessings. But St. Paul forces him to think – Why should he assume that he will be better off than Edom? Edom was once physically on Israel's level, or his superior in claim, when their first fathers were but just born infants. But God chose one and not the other. He may exercise the like inscrutable selectiveness upon the seed of Israel to-day. And Edom did not remain in a merely secondary position. He sank to be a byword for all that is most hateful to God. Be warned, St. Paul would say, it may be that 'with change of name the tale is told of thee³⁰.'

²⁸ 1 Pet. iv. 6. 'The gospel was preached to' these 'dead men that they might be judged according to men in the flesh,' i.e. by perishing in the flood, 'but live according to God in the spirit,' i.e. through our Lord's preaching in Hades. There is, I think, so far, no ambiguity about this passage.

²⁹ Not, however, without regard to man's will to respond to the divine offer, see later, p. 82 ff.

³⁰ Mal. i. 2, 3. 'Was not Esau Jacob's brother? saith the Lord: yet I loved Jacob; but Esau I hated, and made his mountains a desolation, and gave his heritage to the jackals of the wilderness. Whereas Edom saith, We are beaten down, but we will return,' &c. This passage (1) plainly refers to *Esau* as meaning *Edom*, the people; (2) describes not the original lot of Esau, which was secondary indeed, but highly blessed (Gen. xxvii. 39, 40); but the ultimate lot of Esau when he had misused his original endowment in violence and cruelty.

DIVISION IV. § 2. CHAPTER IX. 14-29.

God's liberty in showing mercy and judgement always retained and asserted

But the obvious reply of the Jewish objector to St. Paul's assertion of the absolute and apparently arbitrary freedom of God's election is that it is unfair. It convicts God of unrighteousness. To this objection (ver. 14), which St. Paul deprecates with horror, he replies not by any large consideration of divine justice, but still by keeping the Jew to his own scriptures. The God revealed in scripture must be to the objector still the just God. He cannot call God unjust if His method as it now appears is that to which He called attention long ago. Look back, then, at the past records. Did God disclose Himself as bound to show mercy on Moses the Israelite, or to harden and judicially condemn Pharaoh the Egyptian? No, He declares to Moses His unrestricted freedom to exhibit His compassion on whom He will (Exod. xxxiii. 19). Men cannot by any choice or efforts of their own produce an exhibition of divine favour such as was shown to Moses the leader of Israel: the absolute initiative must come from God, and in taking that initiative He declares Himself absolutely free. In the same way God implicitly asserts His sovereign freedom when He brings Pharaoh out upon the stage of history as an example of the way in which He hardens men's hearts with a hardening which is the prelude to overthrow, that men all over the world may see and tremble at the divine power. It is not because Pharaoh is an Egyptian that he is hardened. He is hardened, as Moses has compassion shown him, simply because it is the will of God so to do in his case.

But the objector comes forward again (ver. 19): 'If this is the arbitrary method of God – if we are simply powerless puppets in the hands of an absolute and arbitrary will, to be saved or be destroyed – at any rate He has no reason to complain of us. If all the power is His, so is the responsibility.' Now St. Paul has it in his hand to show that there remains to man a very real power to retain his position, and consequently a very real responsibility and room for being blamed or praised: for if we cannot create our vocation, we can and we are required to correspond with it in a reverent and docile faith; and it was exactly here that the Jews had failed, in spite of all their prophets had taught them. But he keeps back this answer awhile, because he finds the attitude of such an objector toward God in itself so reprehensible. Such an one has not given consideration to what the relation of man to God really is – the creature to the creator. His critical, complaining attitude is nothing better than foolish.

Thus he takes his antagonist back upon the old prophetic metaphor of the potter and his clay, with which Isaiah and Jeremiah had rebuked the arrogance and impatience of men long ago: 'Shall the thing framed say of him that framed it, He hath no understanding; and shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What makest thou³¹?' He follows, however, most closely upon the later writer of the Book of Wisdom: 'For a potter, kneading soft earth, laboriously mouldeth each several vessel for our service: nay, out of the same clay doth fashion both the vessels that minister to clean uses, and those of a contrary sort. All in like manner; but what shall be the use of each vessel of either sort, the craftsman himself is the judge³².' The thought was often in St. Paul's mind of the inequality of lots in the world and the Church. There are more and less honourable limbs in the body politic: there are vessels for honourable and vessels for dishonourable purposes in the great social economy³³. So it is with the races of men. They are all of one blood – of the one lump. But some have high and others low vocations, and the right to determine of what sort the lot shall be in each case lies absolutely with the Divine Potter. It is childish to dispute His title. And not only so: when the potter, whom

³¹ Isa. xxix. 16, xlv. 9, lxiv. 8; Jer. xviii. 6; Eccelus. xxxiii. 13.

³² xv. 7.

³³ 1 Cor. xii. 22-5; 2 Tim. ii. 20.

Jeremiah was ordered to observe, found a vessel he was making marred under his hand, 'he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it³⁴.' Accordingly, when the chosen material (i.e. the Jews) would not mould to the high purpose for which the Potter was fashioning it, who shall complain if He diverted it to lower uses or threw it away to destruction, and produced out of His stores other vessels which He had already prepared and destined for glorious functions (that is to say, the Gentile Christians)? But the case is even stronger than this. Who indeed shall complain if, when the vessels originally destined for the higher uses prove fit for nothing but destruction, the Divine Potter – though willing, now as in the case of Pharaoh, to let His wrath fall and to manifest His power – yet shows almost unlimited forbearance with them (as in fact God did with the Jews); and when at last He does let His wrath fall, only does so in order to manifest anew the resourcefulness of His mercy³⁵ upon a new and larger Israel, gathered not from among the Jews only, but from among all nations, to be the object of His compassionate regard?

Indeed, the prophet Hosea (ii. 23, i. 10) foresaw this choice of a yet unrecognized people to be God's people. Isaiah again (x. 22) anticipated no more than a remnant surviving of all the multitudes of Israel, because of the sharpness and conclusiveness of the divine judgement upon them. And (i. 9) it is only to the compassion of God that he attributes their exemption by means of the faithful remnant from entire annihilation, like that of the Cities of the Plain.

What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid. For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that hath mercy. For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, For this very purpose did I raise thee up, that I might shew in thee my power, and that my name might be published abroad in all the earth. So then he hath mercy on whom he will, and whom he will he hardeneth.

Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he still find fault? For who withstandeth his will? Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why didst thou make me thus? Or hath not the potter a right over the clay, from the same lump to make one part a vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering vessels of wrath fitted unto destruction: and that he might make known the riches of his glory upon vessels of mercy, which he afore prepared unto glory, *even* us, whom he also called, not from the Jews only, but also from the Gentiles? As he saith also in Hosea,

I will call that my people, which was not my people;
And her beloved, which was not beloved.
And it shall be, *that* in the place where it was said
unto them, Ye are not my people,
There shall they be called sons of the living God.

And Isaiah crieth concerning Israel, If the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, it is the remnant that shall be saved: for the Lord will execute *his* word upon the earth, finishing it and cutting it short. And, as Isaiah hath said before,

³⁴ Jer. xviii. 4. The passage continues with a strong assertion of God's freedom to govern the destinies of nations on moral principles.

³⁵ When Moses asked to see God's glory (Exod. xxxiii. 18), what was revealed to him was His goodness and free mercy, and what St. Paul here means by God's glory is His mercy especially.

Except the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed,
We had become as Sodom, and had been made like
unto Gomorrah.

What has been already said will have been enough to guard against the main sources of mistake in reading this section. St. Paul might have much to say about God's righteousness in general, and large ways of vindicating it. But here he holds fast to the single aspect of righteousness according to which it means that God has been true to the original principles of His covenant. The God who chose Abraham and Moses is the God who is now, and rightly on His own declared principles of government, rejecting the greater part of the people of Abraham and Moses. This – faithfulness to His own declared principles – is what St. Paul here means by His righteousness. And as it was God's declared principle to retain His own liberty to show mercy on men according to His free will, inside or outside the chosen people, so on the other hand He retained His liberty to exhibit His judgement of hardening according to His will inside or outside the chosen people. He who brought Pharaoh the Egyptian upon the stage of history³⁶, as an example of hardening judgement, is within His right in doing the same now with (the mass of) the people of His choice. The liberty asserted for God is wholly consistent with His being found, in fact, to have 'hardened' those only who have deserved hardening by their own wilfulness. It was for such a moral cause that God hardened the hearts of the Jews, that 'seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not hear'³⁷. We can feel no doubt that some similar moral cause underlay the hardening of Pharaoh. But this is not St. Paul's present point. All his argument is directed to asserting God's liberty to show mercy or harden, irrespectively of considerations of race, when and where He in His sovereign moral will chooses.

We should notice that St. Paul's method is here, as elsewhere, what is called ideal or abstract, in the sense that he makes abstraction of a particular point of view; and, apparently indifferent to being misunderstood, substantiates his argument upon the particular aspect which he has taken apart from the whole matter in hand, till it is done with, and then other points can be taken in their turn. And he does not, as a modern writer would do, painfully correlate the various aspects of the subject³⁸.

By means of the famous simile of the potter St. Paul asserts two principles about God: (1) that God is free, and condescends to give no account to His creatures, in absolutely determining the high or low vocations of men. To one man or nation He gives five talents, to another two, to another one. He makes vessels to honourable and vessels to (comparatively) dishonourable uses. He makes men Jews or Assyrians, Englishmen or Hottentots, at His absolute discretion. (2) That God is absolutely free, when the human material which He is moulding for His purposes proves intractable, to repudiate and reject what has, by its refusal to mould, become a 'vessel of wrath' fit 'to be taken and destroyed.' And it is only by a voluntary limitation of this freedom that He exhibits long toleration with the intractable and obstinate, and is longsuffering with them even when His wrath is ready and waiting to show itself. These are the two distinct points in the simile of the potter. We must distinguish carefully between the 'vessels *destined for* dishonour' – the 'less honourable limbs' of humanity – and the 'vessels *of* wrath,' or 'vessels fitted for destruction,' i.e. those which have proved themselves unfit for the vocation to which they were destined and have to be rejected. We note that St. Paul does not say that *God fitted* vessels for destruction, but that He bore long with those which had so *become fitted*. St. Paul never gives us any real justification – if we look at his language carefully – for the idea of any predestination

³⁶ In the original the words run, 'For this cause have I made thee to stand,' i.e. probably, 'I have preserved thy life under the plague of boils, and other plagues, in order to make thee an example of a more conspicuous judgement.' But St. Paul, departing from the Greek Bible, uses a word 'raised thee up,' which in Pharaoh's case, or in that of Cyrus, means to bring upon the stage of history. Isa. xli. 2; cf. Jer. 1. [xxvii in the Greek] 41; Hab. i. 6.

³⁷ See Matt. xiii. 14, 15; Mark iv. 12; John xii. 40.

³⁸ Cf. vol. i. p. 75.

to *rejection*, as distinct from predestination to higher or lower purposes. And the New Testament is full of assurances that a predestination to a low vocation in this world may be a predestination to high glory in eternity, if the humble calling is faithfully followed.

It ought not to be denied, however, that in all this passage St. Paul's feet, as he moves along his argument, are dogged by the metaphysical difficulty of finding room for human free-will inside the universal scope of the divine action and the prescience of the divine wisdom. This is a perennial difficulty. But St. Paul does not touch it. He does not even touch the question of whether God does actually (in our sense) *foreknow* the final destiny of every individual, and how he will act on each occasion³⁹; he does not touch the question how or how far human wilfulness can be allowed to disturb the divine order. In the Pharisaic schools he would certainly have been brought up, as Josephus tells us, both to 'attribute everything to fate and God,' and also to recognize that it 'lay with men for the most part to do right or wrong': to believe that 'everything was foreseen,' and also that 'free-will was given'; or, as Josephus elsewhere puts it (as if it made no difference), to believe 'that some things, but not all, are the work of fate, and other things are in men's own power and need not happen'⁴⁰. That is to say, he would have been educated to believe both in predestination and in freedom, without any special attempt to reconcile the two. We can tell for certain that this inherited belief was further moralized in St. Paul's case by his enlarged view of the divine purpose as working through high and low estates alike, for the final good of all men; and by his deepened perception of the correspondence with God's purpose, which, in the exercise of our freedom, is required of us. But, so far as we know, St. Paul left the strictly metaphysical question exactly where he found it – as an imperfectly reconciled antithesis. And there perhaps we men shall always have to leave it, or at least till we come to know even as we are known.

In the quotations from the Old Testament, with which the section concludes, we notice that St. Paul varies the original application of the passages from Hosea. In the prophet they refer to the recovery of dejected and dishonoured *Israel*, while the apostle applies them to the exaltation of *the Gentiles* from their low estate. As is often the case, while other passages in the prophets were there to prove exactly what he wanted⁴¹, St. Paul takes the words which come into his mind with a considerable latitude of application, and without any critical argument. Thus, if he makes somewhat free with the particular texts, it is in order to vindicate the real teaching of the Old Testament. He has, if not exact criticism, what is much better, profound spiritual insight.

The passages quoted from Isaiah are characteristic and central. This great prophet first clearly perceived that most striking law of human history – that progress comes, not mostly through the majority of a nation, but through the faithful remnant. It is the few best through whom alone God can freely work. It is the best who in the long run determine the moral level of the nation, and either keep the mass of men around them from corruption, or, if that is impossible, provide a fresh point of departure and hope in a society now inevitably, as a whole, hastening to decay and judgement. 'As a terebinth, and as an oak, whose stock remaineth, when they are felled; so the holy seed is the stock thereof'⁴².

³⁹ On the meaning of divine foreknowledge in St. Paul see vol. i. p. 317.

⁴⁰ See Joseph. *Antiq.* xiii. 5, 9; xviii. 1, 3; *Bell. Jud.* ii. 8, 14. Cf. Schürer, *Jewish People* (English trans.), Div. ii. vol. ii. pp. 14 ff.; James and Ryle, *Ps. of Solomon*, p. 96. The Essenes, Josephus says, believed in fate, and not in free-will; the Sadducees in free-will and not in fate; but the Pharisees in both. No doubt Josephus is importing Greek philosophical views into his account of Jewish parties, but substantially his account is probably true.

⁴¹ e. g. Isa. xix. 24; Ezek. xvi. 55. (The exaltation into the fellowship of the chosen people of Egypt, Assyria, Sodom, and Samaria.)

⁴² Isa. vi. 13.

DIVISION IV. § 3. CHAPTER IX. 30-X. 21. *Lack of faith the reason of Israel's rejection*

What is to be our conclusion then? That Gentiles, men beyond the pale of God's covenant, who made no pretension of pursuing righteousness, all at once laid hold on righteousness and made it their own, simply by accepting in faith the divine offer which came their way; while Israel, the chosen people, devoted to pursuing a law of righteousness, never caught up with that of which it was in pursuit. The result seems strange enough. But the reason of it is apparent. Israel⁴³ had been put under a divine election, which required of them the open ear, the responsive will, of faith. But instead of cultivating this temper of faith, they fastened upon the specified observances of the Mosaic law, and blindly adhered to them, as if God had nothing deeper or greater to teach them, and they had nothing deeper or greater to receive. Thus, when the Christ came, with His completer light and claims, they would not have Him. They wanted nothing further, nothing more than they were accustomed to. And thus Isaiah's prophecy was fulfilled, that the Christ, the tried foundation stone, the destined security of all who should believe in Him, would turn out to be a stone at which the chosen people should stumble, and a rock on which it should meet disaster⁴⁴ (ix. 30-33).

And here is the pathos of the situation. Here is what puts passion into St. Paul's desire and his prayer for Israel's entrance into the great deliverance. It is that they have such a real zeal for God, though without any spiritual insight to guide it. A real zeal for God! of that St. Paul's own experience qualified him to testify. But in what sense without insight? In the sense that with Jesus of Nazareth there appeared a divine righteousness, which God was communicating to men⁴⁵; but the Jews, preoccupied with maintaining a standard of righteousness which they had taken for their own – which had become identified, that is to say, with their own self-satisfaction and pride of privilege and independence of interference – failed to perceive the divine purpose, and, in fact, refused to submit themselves to it. For that principle of law which the Jews had come to regard as God's final word, He really intended only as a temporary discipline to be brought to an end by the coming of the Christ, and by the disclosure of the real righteousness which, in Christ, God should offer and man should simply accept in faith. Law and faith are in sharp and intelligible contrast. Under the law of works a man, as Moses says⁴⁶, stands to preserve his life (or save his soul) according as he performs the specified requirements (as if man were an independent being who could thus stand over against God on his merits). But faith, attributing nothing to itself, simply accepts the offer of God, the divine message of compassion brought near to it. Moses of old told the Israelites⁴⁷ that the commandment was not too hard for them, neither was it far off. *It was not in heaven, that they should say, who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, and make us to hear it, that we may do it? Neither was it beyond the sea, that they should say, who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, and make us to hear it that we may do it? But the word was very nigh unto them, in their mouth and in their heart, that they might do it.* These words really describe the character of the Christian message of faith, of which the apostles are the heralds. Truly there is no need for the believer in Jesus to seek some one to scale heaven to reach a remote God, for Christ is come down. Or to descend into the abyss to seek a Christ dead and lost, for Christ is risen. The great deliverance is offered to us on very easy terms. A

⁴³ I have endeavoured sometimes in this analysis to expand what St. Paul means by 'pursuing righteousness,' by 'works' and by 'faith,' in accordance with the meaning already assigned to these words; see vol. i. pp. 7-24.

⁴⁴ Isa. viii. 14; xxviii. 16. Cf. Matt. xi. 6.

⁴⁵ See above, vol. i. p. 17.

⁴⁶ Levit. xviii. 5.

⁴⁷ Deut. xxx. 11-14. I have italicized the words substantially reproduced by St. Paul, but I have quoted the whole passage because its whole meaning is in his mind.

man has only openly to confess that the human Jesus is really the divine Lord, and heartily to believe that God raised Him from the dead. Let him heartily accept that message, and the fellowship in the divine righteousness is his. Let him publicly confess that creed, and the great salvation is open to him. It is the old teaching of Isaiah⁴⁸ – if a man but believe (in the Christ) there is no fear of his being put to shame. And here Jews and Greeks are all on the same level of need and opportunity. There is over all the same Lord Christ, with the same inexhaustible good will towards all who simply call on Him. Again the old scripture testifies that it is every one who calls on the name of the Lord who shall be saved⁴⁹. The conditions then are very simple. To call on the Lord, we may say, men must believe in Him. To have the opportunity of believing on Him, they must have heard about Him. To hear about Him, they need one to speak in His name. And how can men speak in the name of God except as His apostles, as men commissioned and sent from Him? And these terms we know well enough have all been fulfilled. The commissioned heralds of the good tidings of God have gone forth, so that all men may hear and believe and call out to God. Truly Isaiah's vision of the welcome preacher of good tidings⁵⁰ is realized to-day (x. 1-15).

Now we have clear before us the simplicity of the gospel, the message to faith. And we have before us the plain fact that the Israelitish people, preoccupied with their own temporary and misunderstood standard of the law, have not generally accepted it. But this is no more than Isaiah led us to expect. 'Lord,' he cries, 'who gave credence to our message⁵¹?' (Faith, you see, according to the prophet, requires just a listening to a divine message; and this message has come to men by the preaching about Christ.) And can it be pleaded that the Jews have not had the opportunity of hearing the message? No, truly, as the Psalmist says, the voice of God's messengers has gone over all the earth, and their words to the end of the inhabited world⁵². Or can it be said that Israel did not know that a preaching to the *Gentiles* was to be looked for? No, a succession of warnings had reached them. Thus Moses foretold that it should be a nation which (religiously speaking) was no nation, a people without understanding, that God would use to provoke His people to jealousy, and stimulate their emulation⁵³. Again, Isaiah uses startling words, and declares that God has been discovered by those who never sought Him, and revealed to those who never asked for Him⁵⁴ – that is the Gentiles. But the words of Isaiah that follow describe truly the relation of God and Israel. God has tenderly and persistently been offering His love to them, but they have proved themselves only rebellious and full of contradiction (x. 16-21).

This, then, is the plain summary. Israel is rejected because, after every offer, and with every opportunity, they have refused God's leading, refused to be docile, refused to believe, refused to obey.

What shall we say then? That the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith: but Israel, following after a law of righteousness, did not arrive at *that* law. Wherefore? Because *they sought it* not by faith, but as it were by works. They stumbled at the stone of stumbling; even as it is written,

Behold, I lay in Zion a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence:
And he that believeth on him shall not be put to shame.

⁴⁸ Isa. xxviii. 16.

⁴⁹ Joel ii. 32.

⁵⁰ Isa. lii. 7.

⁵¹ Isa. liii. 1.

⁵² Ps. xix. 4.

⁵³ Deut. xxxii. 21.

⁵⁴ Isa. lxxv. 1, 2.

Brethren, my heart's desire and my supplication to God is for them, that they may be saved. For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law unto righteousness to every one that believeth. For Moses writeth that the man that doeth the righteousness which is of the law shall live thereby. But the righteousness which is of faith saith thus, Say not in thy heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down:) or, Who shall descend into the abyss? (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead.) But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach: because if thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus *as* Lord, and shalt believe in thy heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved: for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be put to shame. For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek: for the same *Lord* is Lord of all, and is rich unto all that call upon him: for, Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach, except they be sent? even as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that bring glad tidings of good things!

But they did not all hearken to the glad tidings. For Isaiah saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? So belief *cometh* of hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ. But I say, Did they not hear? Yea, verily,

Their sound went out into all the earth,
And their words unto the ends of the world.

But I say, Did Israel not know? First Moses saith,

I will provoke you to jealousy with that which is no nation,
With a nation void of understanding will I anger you.

And Isaiah is very bold, and saith,

I was found of them that sought me not;
I became manifest unto them that asked not of me.

But as to Israel he saith, All the day long did I spread out my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.

In this passage St. Paul gives us the other side of the question of the rejection of the Israelites. God had retained an absolute freedom, not to be questioned by men, to reject whom He willed. That was the first point. But can we see whom our God wills to reject, or why in particular He rejected (though not finally, as will appear) the chosen people? It is because they failed in faith. And faith is precisely that which is necessary to maintain correspondence with God – it is *the* faculty of fellowship with Him. They failed because the false principle of justification by works had obscured in their minds

the need and meaning of faith. The false principle meant, as we have already seen, the maintaining an accepted standard of conduct and divine service, especially in outward matters, and for the rest claiming to be left alone. The accepted standard was that which distinguished Israel from the rest of the world, and what they had become accustomed to. It was a righteousness of 'their own.' They prided themselves on it. Their public opinion required its observance. It had come to usurp the place of any direct relationship to the voice of God. They had no idea that God could have anything more or deeper to require of them. They had lost personal touch with Him. Therefore seeking to establish this, their own righteousness, they failed to submit themselves to the (now newly revealed) righteousness of God in Christ. This unprogressiveness of the Jewish ideal, this substitution of the accepted standard under the law for the word of God, on the part of the Pharisees, the religious representatives of Israel, is precisely what the pages of the Gospel record. Therefore the 'corner stone of sure foundation' for the divine building became to them the stone on which they stumbled and fell. And yet that the law was a temporary expedient, and not the whole counsel of God, was the deepest witness of the Old Testament; and in being false to the further revelation of the will of God in Christ, they were false to their own deepest principles. All this ground we have gone over already, and need not traverse again⁵⁵.

So also we have already become familiar with the simplicity of the message of God in Christ, and the simplicity of the faith which, rooted in the consciousness of sin and need, and equally possible for all men who can share this consciousness, is required to welcome God's offer, and so be brought by Christ into living union with Him. All this St. Paul has already elaborated, and is here only resuming and recapitulating by the way. But one or two points in the recapitulation require notice.

1. St. Paul takes the basis of his statement of the principle of grace and faith out of the heart of the books of Moses – the idea of the 'word very nigh thee,' of the simple message claiming only to be simply accepted, and of the 'very present help' of a gracious God needing only to be welcomed. The fact is that St. Paul usually idealizes when he treats of 'the law of Moses'; as, for example, when he here says that 'Moses writeth that the man that *doeth* the righteousness ... shall *live* thereby,' as if that was all that Moses said. The principle of law, as Saul the Pharisee had learned to understand it, is the dominant principle in the five Books of the Law, but not the only one. 'Grace, already existing in the Jewish theocracy, was the fruitful germ deposited under the surface, which was one day to burst forth and become the peculiar character of the new covenant⁵⁶.' The God of the new covenant is the God also of the old, and was there already intimating His truer and deeper character. To this St. Paul bears witness by resting his statement of the principle of the new covenant upon the words of the old.

2. In this passage we have the germ of what we call the creed. The lordship of Jesus, in the sense which implies His proper divinity, and His resurrection and triumph over death – was already matter of public confession in the Christian church: to make profession that 'Jesus is Lord' qualified for 'the salvation'⁵⁷: and in this lay hid all that is essential to the Christian creed. Already then in the earliest church subjective faith involved a certain objective and public creed⁵⁸ which came very soon to be called 'the faith.' In this passage also, as in xiv. 9 and in St. Peter's epistle, we recognize, as an element in the common tradition, the belief in the Descent into Hades (the abyss).

3. St. Paul incidentally shows us his instinctive feeling that to be a trustworthy ambassador for God one needs 'apostolate.' 'How shall they preach except they be *sent*?' And this apostolate, as he uses it, means not only an inward sense of mission, but an external sending by Christ Himself; and in pursuance of the same principle, when once the Church has been established, it would mean a sending by those authorized to send in His name. This is the root principle of the Christian 'stewardship.' As the subapostolic Clement expresses it, 'Christ (was sent) from God, and the apostles from Christ.

⁵⁵ See vol. i. pp. 7 ff., 165 f., 250 ff.

⁵⁶ Godet *in loc.*

⁵⁷ Cf. 1 Cor. xii. 3. The lordship of Jesus, we see in this passage, means that He can have applied to Him the sayings of the Old Testament about the Lord Jehovah; and can be 'called upon' as such in prayer (Joel ii. 32).

⁵⁸ Cf. 1 Cor. xv. 1-3.

Each came in due order from the will of God. Therefore, having received the words of command, and having been fully convinced by the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, and been assured in the message of God with conviction of the Holy Ghost, they came forth, preaching the gospel that the kingdom of God was to come. Therefore as they preached in country and towns they established their first-fruits, when they had put them to the proof, to be bishops (i.e. presbyters), and deacons of those who were to come to the faith.' And afterwards, in view of disputes over the presbyteral office, which divine inspiration enabled them to anticipate, they made provision for a due succession in the 'episcopate' on the death of those first appointed⁵⁹.

4. St. Paul's singularly free, but deeply inspired, manner of applying texts from the Old Testament is especially illustrated in this passage.

Thus the passages quoted from Isaiah about the Stone, which St. Paul applies to Christ, refer originally to Jehovah simply in one case (Isa. viii. 14), and probably to His will and covenant as the foundation of Israel's polity in the other (Isa. xxviii. 16). Jewish tradition had possibly already referred them to the Christ⁶⁰; and certainly our Lord's use of Ps. cxviii. 22 – 'The stone which the builders rejected' – as applying to His own rejection, made the reference more obvious. It is indeed in deepest accordance with the spirit of Isaiah: and St. Peter (1 Peter ii. 6), we notice, follows St. Paul in the use of them. Another passage (lii. 7) about 'the feet of those who preach good tidings' is transferred, with added meaning, from the heralds of the redemption from Babylon, to the heralds of the greater redemption. And the opening of chapter lxxv, which originally refers altogether to apostate Israel, is divided, and applied in part to the Gentiles, in part to the Jews. (Other passages in the prophets, we should observe, would justify the former application.) Again, a passage from Ps. xix is transferred very beautifully from the witness of the heavens to the witness of the Gospel; as if St. Paul would say – grace is become as universal as nature. The language of a passage from Deuteronomy, as we have seen, is taken from the law to express the spirit of the gospel. The calling upon Jehovah in Joel becomes in St. Paul's quotation the calling upon Christ. All this free citation, uncritical according to our ideas and methods, yet rests upon a profoundly right apprehension of the meaning of the Old Testament as a whole. The appeal to the Old Testament, even if not to the particular passage, is justified by the strictest criticism.

⁵⁹ Clem, *ad Cor.* 42, 44.

⁶⁰ See S. and H. *in loc.*

DIVISION IV. § 4. CHAPTER XI. 1-12. *God's judgement on Israel neither universal nor final*

But if Israel has thus by her own fault fallen from her high estate, are we then to suppose that God has simply rejected His own chosen people? Such a thought cannot be entertained. How could it have been in the mind of such an Israelite as St. Paul, one who came of Abraham's genuine seed, and of the tribe which held so fast by Judah? No: the people on whom from eternity God's eye rested, to mark them out for Himself and for His purposes, assuredly cannot, as a people, have been cast away⁶¹. What has happened now is only what is recorded long ago in the history of Elijah. Then, as now, a general unfaithfulness in the bulk of the nation concealed the existence of a faithful remnant. Yet God had, as He assured the prophet, reserved for Himself such a remnant, and of very considerable numbers. And now also such a remnant of true Israelites exists in accordance with the selective action of grace – that is to say, God's gratuitous and unmerited good will. Yes: let there be no mistake about it; their position is due to nothing else than the original and continuous action of God's grace; and grace means God's absolutely gratuitous and unmerited good will (which may therefore come upon Gentiles equally with Jews). It excludes the idea of these remnants owing their position to previous merits, or of its being in any way God's response to an antecedent claim⁶².

This then is what we have to recognize. What Israel in bulk sought for (by way of its supposed merit), that it did not get, but a select remnant got it; and upon the rest there fell that judicial hardening – that reversal of their true relation to God – which Moses and Isaiah already discerned in the chosen people⁶³: an abiding stupor, and deafness, and blindness, with regard to God's purpose and will for them. David too, as God's righteous servant, demands, as a divine requital upon his bitter and cruel enemies, that their very abundance should betray them into captivity and prove their stumblingblock; that their spiritual vision should be lost and their backs bent downward to the ground. Which is just what has happened to Israel through their rejection of the Son of David.

The bulk of the people then has stumbled. But we must not exaggerate what has happened. As it is not all of them who have stumbled, so also it is not for ever. Their stumbling is not equivalent to a final fall. Already we can perceive how it may be reversed. The refusal of the Jews to recognize the Christ has been the occasion for a turning to the Gentiles. Thus the salvation of the Christ has come to them. And this has happened in the divine providence in order that, as Moses anticipated, they may in their turn provoke the Jews to jealousy – to a jealous determination not to lose their old privileges. Thus if even the transgression of Israel has proved the occasion for enriching the world as a whole, if even the deficiency of Israel (leaving vacant space, as it were, in the Church) has proved the occasion for enriching the Gentiles, how much more enrichment is to be expected when the chosen people are recovered in their full number?

I say then, Did God cast off his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God did not cast off his people which he foreknew. Or wot ye not what the scripture saith of Elijah⁶⁴? how he pleadeth with God against Israel, Lord, they have killed thy prophets, they have

⁶¹ Three times – 1 Sam. xii. 22, Ps. xciv. 14, xcv. 3 (in the Greek) – the promise occurs 'The Lord will not cast away His people.'

⁶² The vocation and election which made Israel the chosen people were absolutely of God. What distinguished the faithful remnant from the bulk of the nation was simply that they had not altogether failed in faith, so that the unchanging election was not in their cases practically suspended, but God 'reserved them for Himself.'

⁶³ St. Paul refers chiefly to Isa. xxix. 10 – the description of a besotted people whose prophets are eyes that cannot see, and their seers ears that cannot hear; so that the word of God has become as a sealed book; cf. also Isa. vi. 9. But there is a similar passage in Deut. xxix. 4, which partly moulds his language, and supplies the words 'unto this day.'

⁶⁴ Rather, as margin, in Elijah, i.e. the passage of Scripture about Elijah.

digged down thine altars: and I am left alone, and they seek my life. But what saith the answer of God unto him? I have left for myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to Baal. Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace. But if it is by grace, it is no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. What then? That which Israel seeketh for, that he obtained not; but the election obtained it, and the rest were hardened: according as it is written, God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear, unto this very day. And David saith,

Let their table be made a snare, and a trap,
And a stumblingblock, and a recompense unto them:
Let their eyes be darkened, that they may not see,
And bow thou down their back alway.

I say then, Did they stumble that they might fall? God forbid: but by their fall salvation *is come* unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy. Now if their fall is the riches of the world, and their loss the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness?

1. We learn a little more exactly about St. Paul's doctrine of election in this chapter. God's final purpose for good is, as we shall see at the end of the chapter – and in what sense we shall have to consider – upon all men whatsoever. But this universal purpose is worked out through special 'elect' instruments. Thus God recognized⁶⁵ Israel beforehand, i.e. in His eternal counsels, as the people to bear His name in the world. This was the selection of Israel, and was an act of which the initiative was wholly on God's side. It was a pure act of the divine favour. This 'selection of grace' was upon Israel as a whole, but at later stages of the history, frequently enough, owing to the disobedience and apostasy of the majority, it is found to rest in an effective sense only upon a 'remnant' whom God has reserved for Himself, because they have not utterly refused to correspond to the original and continuous call of the divine grace. For the rest their privileges become the occasion of their fall: their light becomes their darkness. For judgement always and inevitably waits upon any form of misused privilege. Thus, when the Christ came, only an elect remnant of the nation welcomed Him. The rest fell under judgement. But God overrules even this apostasy. He takes the opportunity of the absence of those who should have been at the marriage supper of the king's son, to fill the great vacancy from the Gentile world. They are brought within the scope of the selecting call. But God's original vocation is still irrevocably upon apostate Israel. The new Gentile converts are to stimulate them to recover their lost privileges. Their wilfulness and obstinacy is to give place to humility and faith; and Jew and Gentile all together are to constitute the elect catholic church.

This is very simple and cheerful teaching. It leaves for us to consider later the question whether God's original and special vocation resting upon the Jews is finally to *constrain* them all to conversion, and whether in the same way His ultimate purpose of salvation for all men is to take place infallibly in all cases. This question is still to be considered. But at any rate the doctrine of election has lost all that gave it a colouring of arbitrariness and injustice and narrow sympathies.

We ought to notice in the above passage how St. Paul, in recalling the continual obstinacy and hardening of the majority of the chosen people, is following on the lines of St. Stephen's speech (Acts vii. 51).

2. The imprecatory psalms are, especially in our Anglican public services, a great stumblingblock to many – especially the 69th (here cited by St. Paul) and the 109th. These psalms do

⁶⁵ This – to recognize or mark out beforehand – is the meaning of divine 'foreknowing' in St. Paul. See vol. i. pp. 317 f.

not represent barely the cry of an individual sufferer invoking God's curse upon his private enemies. The sufferer, who is the psalmist, or with whom at least the psalmist identifies himself, represents afflicted righteousness. It is God's people, His 'servant' and 'son' according to the language of the Old Testament, that is under persecution from the enemies of God. And he calls upon God to vindicate Himself by punishing the adversary; to let it be seen that His word and promise is truth. 'How long, O God, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge?' Even from this point of view, however, when with the assistance of the modern critics we have in the main purged away the element of private vindictiveness, these psalms no doubt remain with the stamp of narrowness and bitterness upon them. They have none of the larger New Testament sense that the worst enemies of the Church may be converted and live: that our attitude towards all men is to wish them good, purely good and not evil, even though it be under the form of judgement: 'Rejoice when men revile you and persecute you'; 'Bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, pray for them which despitefully use you'; 'That by your good works which they shall behold, they may glorify God in the day of visitation.'

But granted the limitation and bitterness still remaining in these psalms, their citation in the New Testament shows us what is for us the right use of them. They are by implication taken up – where we should least expect them – into the mouth of the Son of Man⁶⁶. That is to say, it is His enemies on whom the judgements are imprecated. There is a wrath of the Lamb. There is a divine sword of judgement which proceeds out of His mouth. He, the administrator of the righteousness of God, expects from His Father judgement on His enemies. It is not necessarily, as St. Paul here indicates, final judgement: the judgement upon the Jews was not yet that; but judgement of some sort – temporal or final – upon His wilful adversaries, the Son expects of the Father. And we men, as we repeat these psalms, are, like the first Christians in face of the suicide of Judas, to identify ourselves with the divine righteousness and accept the law of just retribution. This is the deepest and truest sense in which we can still say the imprecatory psalms; and in these days of a philanthropy that often lacks the stern savour of righteousness, it is very necessary that we should make this sense our own.

⁶⁶ Both in this passage and in Acts i. 20.

DIVISION IV. § 5⁶⁷ . CHAPTER XI. 13-36.
***God's present purpose for the Jews through
the Gentiles: and so for all humanity***

St. Paul would not have it supposed that, in his zeal for the recovery of Israel, he was proving faithless to his vocation as the apostle of the Gentiles. On the contrary, he explains (assuming the Roman Christians to be Gentiles in the mass) that he is, by this very zeal, fulfilling that vocation. The conversion of the Gentiles was meant to react as a stimulus on the Jews. When St. Paul magnifies his Gentile ministry, he does so always with the motive of stinging the jealousy of his own people, and so bringing some of them to salvation. How can such a consummation be too eagerly desired? For if even so pitiable an event as their rejection has yet, in God's providence, been overruled for a good end – the bringing back of the outside world into the fellowship of God⁶⁸

⁶⁷ I follow, by preference, the paragraphs of the R.V., unless there is very strong reason to the contrary.

⁶⁸ Cf. 2 Cor. v. 19, 'God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself.'

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