

**THE DOCTRINE OF ELECTION, AS
REVEALED AND ELUCIDATED IN
THE WORDS OF OUR BLESSED
LORD AND HIS INSPIRED
APOSTLES**

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The Doctrine of Election, as Revealed and Elucidated in the Words of Our Blessed Lord and His Inspired Apostles by Thomas Shann

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THOMAS SHANN

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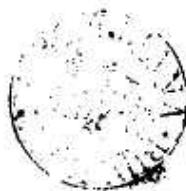
WITH NOTES AND COMMENTS EXTRACTED FROM VARIOUS AUTHORS.

BY THE LATE

REV. THOMAS SHANN, M.A.,

OF UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, OXFORD;

SOMETIME VICAR OF HANDBYVAITE.



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PREFACE.

THE 17th Article of the Church of England expresses a truth which in these days is too much forgotten, when it affirms, that "the godly consideration of Predestination, and our Election in Christ, is full of sweet, pleasant, and unspeakable comfort to godly persons, and such as feel in themselves the working of the Spirit of Christ, mortifying the works of the flesh, and drawing up their minds to high and heavenly things."

Nor is it mere forgetfulness which has caused this doctrine to be overlooked. Even Christian people have been led from various causes to regard it with something of doubt and fear. Prejudices imbibed in youth from

their teachers, together with the marked dislike which the people of the world are accustomed to manifest in reference to such truths, have led many to shrink from them as being (not "sweet and pleasant," but) gloomy and repulsive; and in some way or other inconsistent with the infinite mercy and love of God our Saviour.

This is not the way in which any portion of Divine truth ought to be received by us. The one question with the faithful servant of Christ is, "What does God's Word say?" From that word there can be no appeal;—and to its plain and repeated declarations on the doctrine above mentioned, the reader is here invited to give his serious attention. It is not for man to shrink from a truth as uninviting, or as pertaining to matters too difficult for his comprehension, if God has been pleased to reveal it in Holy Scripture for our instruction. We must remember that neither much learning nor a high order of intellect is required in

those who wish to study in the school of Christ; nor is it to the great in acquired knowledge or in mental power, that our heavenly Father usually gives the clearest views of the deep things of the counsel of peace. We are, on the contrary, led to infer from the words of our blessed Lord and His inspired servants, that these gifts which are so valuable when rightly employed, may often prove a hindrance rather than a help to the full and hearty reception of the Gospel of Christ. "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Thy sight."

While, however, we are to look only to God's written word as our one infallible teacher, and to His Holy Spirit as the one and only source of living light by means of which we may be enabled to understand it, we must be careful not to undervalue the advantages

which are to be derived from human aid in our attempts to arrive at the true interpretation of the sacred oracles.

It is with a view of assisting those whose opportunities of obtaining such extrinsic help are small, that the words of some of the greatest and holiest men the Church has ever known, have here been collected together ; and not without a hope, moreover, that they may in this way be brought within the reach of many who would otherwise never see them. There is at the same time reason to suppose that such a book as this may be acceptable to some who, though possessing the various works which are here referred to, may nevertheless be glad to have the more striking passages relating to this important subject presented to them in an easily accessible form. And yet again, it may not unreasonably be expected that the interest attaching to the names of many of the writers, together with the extreme beauty of a great part of the passages quoted,

may serve to render the consideration of the subject attractive to many who would be repelled by the tone of a dry controversial argument.

We are warned, it is true, by the Article already referred to, that "for curious and carnal persons, lacking the Spirit of Christ," there is danger in the contemplation of these deep things of God; but for them this book is not intended, and it is improbable that such persons will ever read it.

In making this use of the writings of saints and martyrs of former days, I feel that I have their blessings resting on me, and their prayers to aid and prosper me in the work;—the effectual fervent prayers of righteous men, who, during the time of their earthly pilgrimage, offered up their petitions to Almighty God, that He would make their writings an abiding benefit and blessing to His people. Those prayers are as fresh as when in the field or in the closet, in prison or at the stake, they