

Contributed

REMNANT ACCORDING TO THE CHOICE OF GRACE.—ROM.

2:5.

The ordinary translation of this passage, "remnant according to the election of grace," is understood to express an election of the people by God in eternity; but this is by no means a necessary translation, and the rendering of the Greek word by its ordinary meaning of "choice" (an act of choice) yields a sense which appears to be far more in harmony with the context both near and remote. Verse five draws a comparison between the state of Israel under the prophet Elijah and that of Israel in Paul's day, in which only a small remnant as compared with the great body of the people had accepted the true religion. According to a more literal translation verse four reads: "I left for myself seven thousand men, whosoever did not bow the knee to Baal." This announces a historical fact which occurred at a particular time and place; it refers to that momentous period in the history, the test and decision on Mount Carmel. But God's part in that transaction is only manifest in the result, and one with it. God's way of stating the historical fact leaves no room to doubt the divine superintendence as regards the faithful remnant. Paul's comparison brings out a strict parallel both in the choice of the people and the fact that it was the few who made a favorable choice. "Grace" is the thing chosen as the way of salvation, and the fact that this choice proceeds from God's grace is clearly stated in verse 28, if the same word choice (*eklogen*) be taken in the same sense in that verse as consistency seems to require. That the choice of the people in the two cases is the main point of the comparison seems perfectly clear, although this has been missed by all the interpreters with whom we are acquainted, by reason of the ordinary transla-

tion. Eleven comments were consulted only to find that they all follow the English version without question, despite the difficulty which the ordinary conception of God's election introduces into the passage.

The prophet Elijah made it perfectly clear that the celebrated test would bring before the people an issue for their decision. He said to them: "How long halt ye (or dance—quickly pass, or as we would say, vacillate) between two opinions? If Jehovah be God follow him; but if Baal, then follow him." Paul in the epistle puts before the people a similar issue, and which is none other than the choice of their method of salvation. The question of life and of death to them was one of the acceptance of God's plan, and the desirable thing was to bring the people, that is his hearers individually, to the point of decision. This passage constitutes the crown of his sermon. A careful analysis of the epistle serves to make this clear, so that the place of the passage in the general plan furnishes the most convincing proof of the correctness of the new translation and interpretation, overbalancing any difficulties which may at first sight appear to inhere in the introduction of this sense in verses seven and twenty-eight.

Having completed in chapter eight his most extended and formal exposition of the great plan of salvation by faith, Paul makes in chapters nine and eleven inclusive an appeal to both classes which he has kept before him all the while, Jews and Gentiles. He is mainly concerned, however, with the Jews on account of their adverse position as regards the gospel, and because they are his own "kinsmen according to the flesh." He devotes most of his attention to them, though of course his appeal to them is an indirect one. That this is his purpose not merely in this division but in the whole epistle is clearly gathered from verses thirteen and fourteen of chapter eleven. The first part of chapter eleven is the last part of this appeal to the Jews, and is evidently intended as its climax, the object being to remind them that they are confronted

with just such an issue as the Jews in Elijah's day were constrained to face. It seems nothing less than tragic that this climax of the book of Romans has been ruined by an unfortunate translation.

It seems a reasonable surmise that the translation of "*eklogen*" by "election" probably had its origin in "electionem" of the Latin Vulgate, which renders the phrase: "*Reliquiae secundum electionem gratiae salvae factae sunt.*" The word "saving" (*salvae*) is evidently intended as interpretative, and seems to show that the word "grace" is understood to describe the thing chosen, in which case "electionem" must mean "choice." We consider therefore that the Vulgate supports both the translation and the interpretation above suggested. But we find no reference to this fact by any of the interpreters.

In chapter nine the apostle had swept away the false refuge of the Jews contained in the impression that they were the special favorites of Heaven, no matter what they did. Paul shows that the "word of God" in his promises to the fathers would avail nothing to the rejecters of God's plan of salvation by faith in Christ, but that on the other hand the defection of the nation had been duly foretold by the prophets. In chapter ten he comes back to the matter of faith, explaining again this subject in the most simple and striking way, ending with the quotation from Joel 2:32, "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord (Jehovah) shall be saved." He then makes the point that faith and the call must come from preaching. But even when they hear the preaching of the glad tidings of salvation they do not all accept it; and then in chapter eleven he goes on to make the point that this acceptance—this choice of the gospel plan of salvation by grace—is absolutely essential to the attaining of the desired end. If they are lost, God is not responsible, but they themselves are responsible for their own death. The all important matter is therefore to make that choice of the good part which can never be taken from us. Salvation is said to be attained by this act of choice. V. 7.

Passing on to verse six let it be noted that it furnishes positive proof that the method of salvation is still the dominant idea in the apostle's thought: "But (rather "And") if it is by grace, it is no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace." Remember that "grace" is the thing chosen as the method of salvation, so "by grace" is thoroughly in line with this idea, and in fact becomes interpretative of it. To make "*eklogen*" refer to God's election, makes the comment that it is "by grace" worse than a platitude, it simply does not fit. But if "*eklogen*" refers to the peoples in verse five it must refer to the same thing in verse seven, for the opening words indicate that this is a conclusion, and probably a general conclusion from what has gone before. It is a conclusion based upon the illustration which he had drawn, being a formal expression of the parallel by way of summary. There seems no rea-

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