

# ELECTION OF GOD

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**Dr. Silas C. Nair**  
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## CONTENTS

<b>INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>FOREWORD.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>I. THE GOD OF THE BIBLE.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>II. THE WORK OF THE TRIUNE GOD .....</b>	<b>6</b>
Work of the Father .....	6
Work of the Son .....	7
Work of the Holy Spirit .....	7
<b>III. ELECTION OF GOD .....</b>	<b>7</b>
A. Post reformation days .....	7
B. What is Calvinism?.....	8
Total depravity .....	9
Unconditional Election.....	9
Limited Atonement .....	10
Irresistible Grace .....	10
Perseverance of saints .....	10
1. God chose His Son .....	12
The Hebrew Servant.....	12
2. God chose the angels .....	13
a. They are interested in the scheme of salvation.....	13
b. They understand the wisdom of God through the Church.....	13
c. They observe the order in the Church .....	13
3. God chose Israel .....	13
a. They were to be God’s witnesses.....	14
b. To receive, preserve and transmit the scriptures.....	14
c. They were to be a channel for the Messiah to come:.....	15
d. They were to be a light to the Gentiles.....	16
4. God chose the Church .....	16

**IV. PREDESTINATION ..... 17**

    A. Predestination and Freewill..... 20

    B. Foreknowledge and Freewill ..... 21

    C. Foreknowledge is Predestination? ..... 22

  

**V. SOME DIFFICULTIES..... 23**

    A. The case of believers in Antioch..... 23

    B. The case of Pharaoh ..... 24

    C. The case of the Divine Potter ..... 26

    D. The case of Jacob..... 26

    E. The Salvation in Thessalonians ..... 27

    F. The fullness of the Gentiles ..... 27

    G. Regeneration before Belief? ..... 28

    H. Does the Father irresistibly draw a person to Christ?..... 28

  

**VI. CONCLUSION ..... 29**

**ENDNOTES ..... 30**

## INTRODUCTION

Here is a small book that deals with a great subject, the “Election of God”, from the credible pen of Dr. Silas C. Nair, a long time friend of mine. Election of God has been a debatable theological dogma from post reformation days. Calvinism has done so much harm to the teaching of the whole plan of salvation that God has made to sinful mankind. In this small book, Dr. Silas has done an excellent work in the light of the Scriptures. This is not for theologians. Yet the writer, who has handled this subject of theological debate with confidence and standing very close to the Bible and without unduly being influenced by any particular system of theology, has used his gift of communication in producing a simple and readable book. It is written in an understandable language so that every one will be able to understand what the scriptural impact of Election, Predestination, foreknowledge etc, is. Today our assemblies are deviating from the scriptural teaching. Peccability of Christ, Hyper Calvinism and even non-Trinity are some of the strange doctrines creeping into our assemblies knowingly or unknowingly.

My dear friend, Dr. Silas, has done a tremendous work presenting the five point Calvinism in simple words and the correct teachings of the Word of God on these subjects. If the Bible says anything about a particular subject, the assemblies of the brethren who hold the Bible as their final authority would only say “Amen” to it.

Martin Luther, the Reformer, is reported to have said: *“Don’t defend the Bible. It is a roaring lion. Let it be loose”*. What he meant was: The Bible is its own defender. My friend has taken this close to his heart in presenting his thesis on Election. The God of the Bible will never act inconsistent with His nature has been the solid foundation on which he rests when he deals with many acts of God in the work of salvation.

May the Lord bless the writing ministry of Dr. Silas C. Nair in the days to come for the edification of the Lord’s people.

**Dr. O. M. Samuel**  
Principal  
BBI Pathanamthitta.

## FOREWORD

*Calvinism, Arminianism, or The Scripture?* What is Truth, asked the judge two millennia ago. The question has not lost its punch or relevance even after the passage of time. New questions come up, new statements are passed as the divine truth, and new movements gather around them. There is a seductive force that attracts believers constantly towards these forces. One can make an objective assessment of these movements only if one keeps asking the question “What Is Truth”.

John Calvin answered the question by murder: by consenting to kill all those who disagreed with him. He was not alone. Catholics killed everyone who dared to differ with them, but Protestants were not far behind. Murder was the standard solution for settling doctrinal questions and difference.

The arrival of the Assembly movement brought a bit of a change. Instead of murder, the tool became character assassination and disfellowshipping. No honest person can feel comfortable if he reads what happened in England in the first 25 years of this movement. However, India was different. When the assembly movement started, it is the others who did this to us. We ourselves were Bereans who settled things basically by appealing to the Scripture.

Time has come once again to find the Biblical truth on several key doctrines. These doctrines have been permeating among the Brethren through the influence of non Brethren writers. (Almost all theology and expository books used by most Assembly man are authored by non Assembly writers). The infiltration can be traced to the influence of teachers in the Hindustan Bible Institute and the Bharat Bible College where Calvinism ruled the classes of many teachers. Having infiltrated the assemblies in this way and through books for over five decades, Calvinism is in danger of suppressing the more fundamental truths such as *Bible Alone, Faith Alone, Grace Alone, Christ Alone*.

It is high time for us, known as people of The Book, to go back to the Scripture and correct our perspective. Dr. Silas Nair is to be commended for writing the first seminal work on this theme. He stands on the firm foundation that “Scripture alone, and nothing else”. That is the foundation for which the New Testament pattern assemblies are known worldwide.

Dr. Nair has done a commendable job, but the book should be considered as the first attempt only. This is because he has kept it brief out of necessity. Second because the subject itself needs an open and in depth biblical analysis. The opinions of humans, scholarship, church councils, etc are not to be given any weight. Only the Scripture should prevail when we come to our final conclusion. This is exactly what is seen in the present book, and this is what we should see once the discussion progresses beyond this book.

-Dr. Johnson C. Philip

# THE ELECTION OF GOD

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“God has chosen some for salvation. It is according to the sovereignty of God. He shows mercy unto whom he will show mercy and hardens the heart of those whom he will. This is what the Bible says. None can question the will of God”. When I heard this I felt very sorry. I have preached to many at many times that, “God is love. He does not cast out anyone who come to Him”. These words are an attempt, brethren beloved, to know the “election of God” (1 Thes.1.4). Who is God?

## I. THE GOD OF THE BIBLE

Who is the God of the Bible? How can we know Him? Bible itself gives us an answer to this question. “God is love”. “God is light”. “God is good”. We know God by these and many others of His attributes. Note the following ten attributes of God.

1. God is Holy
2. God is just
3. God is love
4. God is Truth
5. God is sovereign
6. God is omnipotent
7. God is omnipresent
8. God is omniscient
9. God is good
10. God is faithful

Of these attributes which one is prominent? Is it sovereignty or love? Or is it Holiness? As God is one hundred percent holy, He is one hundred percent love and also one hundred per cent just. The uniqueness of the nature of God is that all the attributes of God work together. God does not do a work which will nullify any of his attributes. God cannot also do that.

Some people sometimes ask: “Could not God have created man in a state in which he could not sin”? There is only one answer for that: “He could not, because He did not”. When God said: “Let us make man in our image to be our likeness (Gen.1.26), God will not and because of that He cannot make man in any other way. God has intelligence, feeling and will. And this likeness has to be found in man also. Man should have the will to choose. Therefore, God created man in such a state where he was given free will to either obey or disobey God.

## II. THE WORK OF THE TRIUNE GOD

Writing to the saints at Ephesus, Apostle Paul said: Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus” (1.3-14). These blessings are the work of the Triune God.

### WORK OF THE FATHER

- Election

- Predestination
- Adoption
- Acceptance

### WORK OF THE SON

- Redemption
- Forgiveness
- Knowledge of His will
- Inheritance

### WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

- Sealing
- Earnest & assurance

All these blessings are spiritual riches of a believer. The first one is election.

## III. ELECTION OF GOD

This is a deep subject over which spiritual giants have different opinions. The secret things belong unto God (Deut.29.29). But he has revealed to us the things we ought to know in words the Holy Spirit teaches (1 Cor.2.9-10, 13). We cannot come to any conclusion on the basis of one or two verses. Since election is related to other spiritual blessings, the subject encompasses all the attributes of God also. It is not the theological system that we believe; rather it is the Word of God that is the foundation of our study.

A word of caution is in order here. The danger of blindly following any theological system should be avoided. Scripture is our only right source of knowledge of God, man and salvation. Blindly following a theological system has played havoc in the Church of God and have made bitterest enemies of God's children who ought to love one another. Then and now, it is the same.

After the protestant reformation, John Calvin in his Institutes and other writings formulated a theological system. His disciples like Beza and others, built upon this and the Reformed Church largely followed this system; though there were some who did not agree with this.

John Calvin was a very influential theologian who also influenced the State to a large extent and dealt with his opponents very harshly. Therefore, we would look at the basic tenets of Calvinism and the pitfalls of blindly following it. Therefore, as the saints in Berea, we should not only "receive the word with all readiness of mind, but search the scriptures daily, whether those things were so" (Acts 17.11).

### A. POST REFORMATION DAYS

The Reformation of the 16<sup>th</sup> century resulted in the creation of Protestant churches. Martin Luther (1483-1546) was the human element who gave back to the Church the doctrine of "Justification by faith". The tenets of the French born Swiss theologian, John Calvin (1509-1564) defined Presbyterianism. Calvin was a brilliant man, and the Protestant churches were ready to receive Calvin's Institutes and Theology. This Augustinian disciple, within two years of his conversion (1534?) (we know little about Calvin's conversion, but have information to indicate

that he had frequent contacts with men of Protestant tendencies while a student)<sup>1</sup>, he produced his *Christianae Religionis Institutio* (1536). Though Calvin was virtually unknown to Protestant Churches at this time, became popular amongst them. His apology for the new doctrine was very well accepted.

Theodore Beza (1519-1605) was Calvin's successor in Geneva as the head of Reformed Protestantism<sup>2</sup>. He studied Law and as a lawyer went to Paris. In 1548, he renounced Roman Catholicism. He sided with Calvin against Bolsec on the doctrine of predestination and came to Calvin's defense after the death of Servetus. Upon Calvin's death in 1564, the full weight of Calvin's responsibility came upon Beza. His strong defense of double predestination, biblical literalism, church discipline, and other Calvinistic ideas did much to harden the movement, and to begin the period of Reformed Scholasticism (ibid p.126).

Scholasticism is the theology and philosophy taught in the medieval schools from the eleventh to fourteenth centuries, and revived in later periods such as the late sixteenth and seventeenth and nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It features the application of Aristotelian categories to the Christian revelation and attempts to reconcile reason and faith, philosophy and revelation. As a theological method it is associated with organized textbook theology and the thesis method" (ibid p.885).

Jacob Arminius, the Dutch Theologian (1560-1609) studied under Beza and in 1588 went to Amsterdam to serve as minister. Later he questioned some of the teachings of Calvinism and his lectures on the Doctrine of Predestination led to a violent controversy. After the death of Arminius, his followers issued a Remonstrance in 1610, which was later known as Arminianism. The major points of departure from strict Calvinism are:

1. The decree of salvation applies to all who believe in Christ and who persevere in obedience and faith;
2. Christ died for all men;
3. The Holy Spirit must help men to do things that are truly good (such as having faith in Christ for salvation);
4. God's saving grace is not irresistible; and
5. It is possible for those who are Christians to fall from grace.

Today in Protestant Christianity there are those who teach Calvinism and Arminianism as two systems of theology and also a remnant as always, who follow the Scripture diligently without following either of the two. Philip Schaff, the historian, has this to comment about Calvin: He was the ablest exegete among the Reformers, Calvinism is one of the great dogmatic systems of the Church. It is more logical than Lutheranism and Arminianism, and as logical as Romanism. And yet neither Calvinism nor Romanism is absolutely logical.

The Calvinistic system, has its fundamental defect of confining the saving grace of God and the atoning work of Christ to a small circle of the elect, and ignoring the general love of God to all mankind (John 3:16). It is a theology of Divine sovereignty rather than of Divine love<sup>3</sup>.

### **B. WHAT IS CALVINISM?**

In spite of many differences among theologians, Calvinism is generally explained by the acronym TULIP. It was Philip F. Congdon who wrote that "a tulip is a beautiful flower, but bad

theology. The fruit of the flower is appealing; but the fruit of theology is appalling"<sup>4</sup>. The acronym is rendered as under:

- **T**otal depravity
- **U**nconditional election
- **L**imited Atonement
- **I**rresistible grace
- **P**erseverance of saints

It is needless to say that none of these phrases ever appear in the 66 books of the Bible

Reformed theology is often called "Calvinism" because of the great impact of Calvin. "It is doubtful whether Calvin's distinctive theology, rooted in biblical exegesis (?), was properly grasped by many who came later... Consequently, many scholars posit a dichotomy between Calvin and the Calvinists"<sup>5</sup>. Theologians have described Calvin and Calvinism according to their own theological persuasion. No doubt it would be naturally colored. But what does today's Calvinism teach? Though a detailed study of the above five points of Calvinism is not possible at this stage nor is it intended, a very short mention of this doctrine has to be made.

### **Total depravity**

Man is dead in sins and trespasses and he is totally depraved. This may sound perfectly sound and scriptural. It is only when we see what is meant by this, the problem arises. The scripture clearly teaches that man is sinful and he is dead in sins and trespasses. It is also true that man by no act of his, can return to God's favor. In that sense man is totally depraved. God has to take the initiative to save him. But total depravity does not mean that man has become as bad as he possibly can be. There is still some in good in him. Total depravity also does not mean total inability. When modern Calvinism teaches that man is dead and he cannot hear the voice of God, this becomes unscriptural. There are several invitations of God to man both in the Old and New Testaments. These invitations become meaningless and a mockery if man cannot hear the voice of God. When God commands all men everywhere to repent (Acts 17.30), and if man is unable to do this, the character of God himself becomes questionable. The clear statement of the Bible is that "He that believes the Son has everlasting life" (Jn.3.36).

Calvinism's teaching that man is dead and he is to be regenerated before he can hear the voice of God is also wrong. Regeneration is the work of the Spirit in the sinner to impart life unto him. This takes place in salvation.

### **Unconditional Election**

God elects a certain number of men for salvation. They are the elect. He could have saved them all, but was not pleased to do so and allows them to go to hell. This is his pleasure who does everything according to the good pleasure of his will (Eph.1.9,11). It is true that "He does according to His will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, what does thou?" (Dan.4.35). But to say that "*foreordination means God's sovereign plan, whereby He decides all that is to happen in the entire universe....He has foreordained everything 'after the counsel of His will': the moving of a finger, the beating of a heart, the laughter of a girl, the mistake of a typist - even sin*"<sup>6</sup> is to say the least that man is a robot God has made. The teaching of 'unconditional election', that God has unchangeably decreed from eternity who will be saved and who will be lost, makes mockery of the ministry of

reconciliation committed to us and our beseeching the sinners in the stead of Christ to be reconciled to God (2 Cor.5.19,20).

### Limited Atonement

This is the doctrine which says that Christ died and paid the penalty of their sins only for the elect. His death is not efficacious for others. If God has predestined some for heaven and others for hell, it has to naturally follow that He did not die for the reprobate. If Christ did die for them, his death is vain. The Calvinist's deductive syllogism therefore says that Christ died only for the elect.

Paul writes to Timothy: Christ "gave himself a ransom for all" (1 Tim.2.6); "he is the savior of all men" (4.10). Peter writes: that there were false prophets who denied the Lord that bought them, i.e. those for whom Christ died (2 Pet.2.1). The doctrine of "Limited Atonement" has no basis in the scriptures but is only arrived at by logic. J.R. Baker writes: "*The alleged doctrine of limited atonement is not at all supported by scripture*"<sup>7</sup>. The infinite worth of the sacrifice of Christ is limited by this doctrine. The reconciliation achieved by the blood of the cross is "all things" whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven (Col.1.20).

### Irresistible Grace

"God by His grace is able to draw unto himself any one He wills and respond to the gospel. But God gives this irresistible grace to only the elect and send others to hell". This has no basis in the Word of God. What does the Scripture say? When one listens to the gospel, the light of the Word is given to him. The God of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ who is the image of God should shine unto them. But, "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor.4.4-6) is given to those who is willing to accept the gospel.

Both in the Old and New Testaments we find many occasions when men and women have resisted the Spirit of God. Stephen told the men of Israel, "you do always resist the Holy Ghost, as your fathers did, so do you" (Acts 7.51). Louis Berkehof, the Calvinist Theologian, speaks of universal common grace, general common grace, covenant common grace, and special grace, (which is deemed irresistible and for the elect only) etc.

We are saved by grace through faith(Eph. 2:8). But there many who reject this grace and as a consequence of their actions, go to hell. Paul writes: we then, as workers together with Him beseech you also, that you receive not the grace of God in vain ( 2 Cor.6:1).

### Perseverance of saints

God has sovereignly given salvation to his elect and he will not allow them to loose it. According to them the perseverance does not depend upon their own free will but upon the immutability of the decree of election. What it really comes to is that the Calvinist is urged to look to his own perseverance as the ground of his assurance.

We believe on the eternal security of the believer. But our assurance is not built upon our own perseverance. It is the blood of Christ that makes me safe and of course the word of God makes it sure.

We would neither follow John Calvin nor Jacob Arminius or any others. Scripture is our only light and in simple faith we would look to the Scriptures to understand this wonderful subject of 'Election of God'

### *The Election of God*

When we study the "election of God" certain questions may naturally come to our mind. Some of them are:

*Does it mean that God has chosen certain sinners for salvation?*

*Or is it that God has preordained them for salvation?*

*Or is it because that God has predestined some for salvation he enforced His will in such fashion?*

One thing should be firmly settled in our minds. God is perfect and there is no injustice in Him. He is not a respecter of persons. All his works are perfect. God's word is true. Certain portions of scriptures are hard to understand but not impossible. There are no contradictory statements in the Bible. The Spirit of truth will lead us into truth.

God of course has perfect freedom to choose certain things. But this decision is only in perfect harmony with his other attributes. An enquiring mind receives the answers. Our question is "whom has God chosen"? Bible gives us four different and distinct answers:

1. God chose His son (Isa.42.1; 1 Pet.1.19, 20).
2. God chose certain angels (1 Tim.5.21).
3. God chose Israel (Rom.9.5).
4. God chose the Church (Eph.1.4, 12).

These answers have made the subject of "election" a complex and simple one at the same time. In all these four cases the purpose of election cannot be same. Each case should be understood in its context.

The Book of Genesis begins with the word, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. But God decided certain things before he began creation. These are before the foundation of the world. Before we consider this, let us remember, that before God created time, space and matter (Gen.1.1) from everlasting to everlasting He is God (Ps.90.2). He is the same yesterday, today and forever. He is beyond the three tenses (yesterday, today and tomorrow). God dwells in His eternal presence.

Before God created man, He knew that man will sin and to save sinful man He also made a way. Salvation is not an after-thought of God. For the salvation of man God has only one plan. God prepared this plan through the work of His Son. In the eternal counsels of God it was decided that the second person of the Trinity, the Son of God, will assume human flesh for the salvation of man, will enter the world and die instead of man, rise again and ascend unto heaven and sitting at the right hand of God will do the High Priestly ministry on behalf of those who believe in him and thus consummate salvation. This work of the Son of God is to redeem those who believe in Him from the guilt, and penalty, power and ultimately from the presence of sin. These are things God has decided in His eternal council.

## 1. GOD CHOSE HIS SON

Behold my servant, whom I uphold, mine elect in whom my soul delights (Isa.42.1). This was the prophecy concerning the Son of God. This was fulfilled in connection with the public ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. "That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet saying, "Behold my servant, whom I have chosen, my beloved, in whom my soul delights" (Matt.12.16, 17). He was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these times (1 Pet.1.20; cf. Rom.16:25,26; Eph 3:9,11;2 Tim 1:9,10). The Son of God is the Servant chosen by God.

### The Hebrew Servant

When a Hebrew bought a Hebrew servant, he served the master 6 years and in the seventh year he was to go out free for nothing. If he came by himself, he shall go out by himself; if he were married, then his wife shall go out with him. If his master has given him a wife and she have born him sons or daughters the wife and her children shall be her master's and he shall go out by himself. And if the servant shall plainly say, I love my master, my wife and my children; I will not go out free. Then his master shall bring him unto the judges; he shall also bring him to the door, or unto the door post; and his master shall bore his ear through with an awl; and he shall serve him for ever (Ex.21.1-6). This is the law concerning a Hebrew servant.

David in his Psalms speaks thus about this servant: "mine ears have thou opened....in the volume of the book it is written of me (Ps.40.6, 7). This type has been explained to us in the book of Hebrews.

When the writer speaks of the Old Testament sacrifices "...can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect....but a body has thou prepared for me" (Heb.10.1, 5); the subject here is the bodily sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The servant-hood of Christ was not imposed upon Jesus by the Father. He accepted this position voluntarily, "he made himself of no reputation". This was something that was decided upon in the eternal counsel of the Triune God. A body was required for the Son to do the will of the Father. The Father prepared the body for the Son. He came into this world in that body. This body also was necessary for his death. As the children are partakers of flesh and blood he also likewise took part of the same, and by his death destroyed him that has the power of death, the Devil. (Heb.2.14, 15).

Thus, the servant who was chosen by the Father fulfilled the will of the Father. These facts were known to the Triune God before the foundation of the world and are manifested unto us in these times.

Christ is the beloved of God and chosen of God. Believers are those who are chosen in Christ and accepted in the Beloved (Eph.1:5, 6). Let us also consider in what other sense Christ was chosen of God.

He was chosen as the servant (Matt.12.18).

He is precious: Christ is the Living Stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious (1 Pet.2.4). Coming to him as living stones, the church is built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. The work of

redemption which God had foreordained before the foundation of the world, He fulfilled through the work of the Son.

He is the beloved of God Matt.12.18

He is the chief corner stone 1 Pet.2.6

## **2. GOD CHOSE THE ANGELS**

While writing about the order in the Church of God, Paul gives this command to Timothy: “I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels that thou observe these things without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality” (1 Tim.5.21). There are elect angels and angels who are fallen because of rebellion. Everlasting fire is prepared for the latter (Matt.25.41). The elect angels are neither for salvation nor for the work of salvation. But they are chosen ones. In what sense it is?

### **a. They are interested in the scheme of salvation:**

“ When the Spirit of Christ which were in the prophets when they prophesied about the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow, searched and inquired diligently the grace that should come unto you” (1 Pet.1.10-12). Even the angels desire to look into this.

### **b. They understand the wisdom of God through the Church**

Church was a mystery hidden in God in ages past but now revealed to his apostles and prophets. The manifold wisdom of God is made known unto the principalities and powers (i.e. angels) in heavenly places by the Church (Eph.3.10.11).

### **c. They observe the order in the Church**

The head of the woman is man. When a woman prays in the church without her head covering, she dishonors her head. Woman is the glory of man and that glory should not be revealed in the Church. Therefore she should also cover her head. Man is not made for the woman, but woman for the man. For this cause ought the woman to have power on her head because of the angels (1 Cor.11.5, 7, 10). The Elect Angels look down and see that woman is subject unto man and in the Church he has power over her. In the Garden of Eden, the authority of man was flouted by the woman, she was deceived and became the transgressor (1 Tim.2:14). But in the new creation, she is the symbol of spontaneous submission.

It is the church of God that is the testimony for God on the earth. The elect angels are eager to see this testimony. The angels are not chosen for salvation.

## **3. GOD CHOSE ISRAEL**

The redemption of Israel is a subject that has created confusion in the minds of many believers. God chose Israel with a special purpose. Not only so, the election of Israel is National and not personal. God who called Abraham told him, “I will make thee a great nation.....and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed (Gen.12.2, 3). The blessing which God gave to Abraham was repeated to Isaac, Jacob and to the Fathers. “Yet now hear, O Jacob my servant; and Israel whom I have chosen” says the Lord (Isa.44.1). God told Cyrus, his anointed, that he called him by name, and surnamed him though he has not known him, “for Jacob my servant’s sake and Israel mine elect” (Isa.45.1, 4). Abraham’s calling by God falls within the purview of God’s sovereignty. It was later that Abraham believed God and it was counted unto him for righteousness (Gen.15.6)

God never compels a believer to believe in him or not to believe in him (Cf. Matt.23.37; Rev.22.17). Yet He wants every man to repent of his sin and come to Him. He now commands all men every where to repent (Acts 17:30). *“But to show his sovereignty He chose from amongst the wicked Pharaoh of Egypt (Rom.9.17), and to manifest his work of salvation from amongst the believers He chose some believers as special agents. It is in this sense God chose Abraham. God called Abraham even as the mediator of salvation”*<sup>8</sup>. God made from Abraham a nation - of Israel. Jesus Christ was born as the son of David and son of Abraham. The meaning is that Israel was chosen in Abraham. The purpose is for Israel to be the people of God on the earth. The blessings the Jews received were temporal and earthly (Gen.12:2, 3; 15:18-21).

In the number of Israel there were believers and unbelievers. We should understand this cardinal difference. Personal salvation is only on the basis of the blood of Christ. But the nation of Israel was redeemed when the Passover lamb was slain and thus Israel became a medium to establish the kingdom of God on earth. It is true that Israel failed in her mission. But “at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace” (Rom.11.5).

Who is Israel? Paul himself gives us an answer to his question: “to whom pertains the adoption, and the glory and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God and the promises; whose are the fathers and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen (Rom.9.4-5). When Paul proclaimed that all are sinners it irritated the Jews. They thought that the Jew who keeps the law is entitled to personal salvation. But they did not realize that “For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel. Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children, but in Isaac shall thy seed be called” (Rom.9.6, 7).

Why God did choose Israel? A four-fold purpose in the plan of God is evident in their election:

### **a. They were to be God’s witnesses**

Israel as a nation was created by God (Isa.43.15). The nation has been redeemed and called by name (v.1). They were chosen to be witnesses of the Lord (v.10). The Lord spoke to Israel and said: “You only have I known of all the families of the earth” (Amos 3.2). In this sense God knew no nation of the earth. When the Lord redeemed the nation and saved them from the bondage of Egypt there was no strange God among them (v.12). Israel knew and understood the God of Israel. This was the reason God called them to be His witnesses. The chosen nation need not be afraid to witness about the God of Israel among the heathen (Isa.44.8), because the Lord of hosts is the first and the last and beside him there is no God (v.6)

Their witness is to their monotheistic faith. The Shema of Israel which the pious Jews uttered every day is: Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord” (Dt.6.4).

### **b. To receive, preserve and transmit the scriptures**

“What nation is so great, who has God so nigh unto them, as the Lord our God is in all things that we call upon him for? And what nation is there so great, that has statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law which I set before you this day? (Deut.4.7, 8)”, asked Moses to Israel. There is no nation like Israel.

The glory of Israel is her God. They call upon him and He answers them, leads them, instructs them, and protects them. Their relation to this Living God made them separate from all the nations of the world. When Frederick the Great asked his Prime Minister to prove that the Bible

is true in one Word: He said, your majesty, “The Jew”. When the Jews entered the promised Land of Canaan, there were many mighty and great nations there. But they are no more. The Jews remains a separate race. They rested on a solid foundation. Their nearness to God was a hallowing privilege. He dwelt in the midst of these people as a Pilgrim.

The sacredness of the divine law is emphasized: “Law, being the utterance of righteousness, is unalterable as righteousness itself, permanent amid all the mutations of human affairs. Its requirements are statutes, stable as the everlasting hills”. It is the veritable voice of God, his thought and the mirror of his mind. What a privilege Israel had! Their open ears can listen to the imperial voice from heaven. The Law of God is wiser than all man’s developed legislation. “The Law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean enduring for ever: the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether” (Ps.19.7-9). The Law of God asserts its authority over the intellect, emotions, the moral faculty and the will of man. The Law was given as a rule of life for a covenant people. It touched all walks of their life. It is the path way to true eminence.

The Law was to be in their heart; they should teach them diligently unto their children, and shall “talk of them when thou sit in thy house, and when thou walk by the way, and when thou lie down and when thou rise up (Dt.6.6-7)”. It was their duty to preserve and transmit the law to the next generation. Israel disobeyed and served other gods. They became idol worshippers. Their God sent them to captivity. In Babylon they learned the veracity of the Scriptures and came back to the Promised Land. During the period of 400 years between Malachi and Mathew the sect of Pharisees were born. They studied the Law and became the new custodians of the law. In the days of the Lord Jesus Christ, their interpretation of the Scriptures nullified it. The Lord told them, that by their tradition, they make the Law of God of no effect (Mark &:7, 13). They rejected the Messiah when He came but still hold on to the Sacred Scriptures and look for the Messiah. The Law of God even now keeps them as a distinct race.

### **c. They were to be a channel for the Messiah to come:**

God chose Abraham and promised to make him a great nation. The Lord accomplished this in Egypt, the furnace of iron (Dt.4.20). God exercised His sovereignty in choosing Abraham and he continued his sovereign choice. He rejected Ishmael the first born and chose Isaac, the son of promise (Gen.22.18; Gal.3.16). When twins were born to Isaac and the sovereign choice intervened and said the elder shall serve the younger (Gen.25.23). Jacob was the chosen one. Of the twelve sons of Jacob, Judah was chosen, rejecting Reuben the first born. The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the law giver from between his feet, until Shiloh come (Gen.49.10). Judah had illicit relations and begot Phares of Tamar the prostitute. A bastard shall not enter the congregation of the Lord; even to his tenth generation shall he not enter into the congregation of the Lord (Deut.23.2). This curse ends with David. An Ammonite or Moabite shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord even to their tenth generation (Dt.23.3). This curse is removed with Jotham. Jechonias is called Jehoiakim in 2 Kings 24.6 and 2 Chr.36.8 His son Coniah is cursed as childless , a man that shall not prosper in his days: for no man of his seed shall prosper, sitting upon the throne of David, and ruling any more in Judah (Jer.22.30). Though he had children his literal children shall not inherit the kingdom. If Jesus Christ had been the literal physical child he cannot inherit the throne of David. Yet he is the legal heir and is entitled to the throne of David. From all the genealogy what we find is that Jesus Christ the Messiah is the son of Abraham and son of David.

The righteous demands of the Law have been met as in the case of the bastard and the Moabites, the Grace has triumphed as in the case of Ruth, and God has exercised His sovereignty. His attributes work in perfect harmony. His sovereign choice was well exercised in Israel. What is it? The channel of the Messiah was kept clean. The Messiah was born of Mary, as the seed of the woman.

#### **d. They were to be a light to the Gentiles**

The redeemed nation was told by the Lord: "It is a light thing thou should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou may be my salvation unto the end of the earth (Isa.49.6) Primarily this passage and 42.6 speaks of Christ.. But Israel has had the privilege of seeing the light in their God. Israel has no light of her own. With the privileges they had Jehovah's reflected glory should have shone out from them. But they walked in darkness (Isa.59.9). But on a future day the glory of the Lord will shine on them and the gentiles will come to this light (Isa.60.3).

When thick darkness covered the whole land of Egypt (Ex.10.22) the children of Israel had light in their dwellings. This will happen again.

### **4. GOD CHOSE THE CHURCH**

Through Apostle Paul it has been revealed to us that Church was a mystery hidden in God (Eph.3.9). When he speaks of our spiritual blessings, the Apostle writes: Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as he has chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love" (Eph.1.3, 4). God has chosen us in Christ. God has blessed us in Christ. We have not been chosen to be placed in Christ. We should never forget the fact that God saves us by grace, and God saves only those who believe. Therefore God's election is not for salvation, but for God's purposes of those who are redeemed by him and also about the heavenly blessings that they have in Christ. Sir Robert Anderson says: "This heavenly election is about the heavenly people of this age". God has not chosen anyone to become a believer. But God has chosen those whom he foreknew as believers. When did this election take place? It was before the foundation of the world (Eph.1.4).

It is not necessary for us to inject any of our humanistic thinking or system of theology into this. The Scripture does not say that God's choosing or predestination is dependent on His foreknowledge, and then to question the sovereignty of God. Scripture does not say that God predestinated some because he fore-knew; but it does teach us that "whom He did forknow, He did predestine", i.e, His predestination is consistent with His foreknowledge.

Why did God chose them? "So that we (those who are in Christ) might be holy and without blame before him in love". This is the purpose for which we are chosen.

We saw earlier that God Chose Christ. We also saw the reason why God chose him. We are chosen in Christ and have been accepted in the beloved and predestinated us unto the adoption of sons by Jesus Christ to himself (Eph.1.5, 6). In their Book "God's Strategy in Human History" Forester and Marson describes thus:"We were chosen in Christ. It does not mean that we were chosen to be placed in Christ. It also does not mean that God chose us for repentance and yet some others not to repent. But when we repented and were born again and became members of the body of Christ, we became a part of his election.. Christ is the elect one and we were chosen in Him. This, God in his foreknowledge prepared before the foundation of the world.

William Kelley also says: God chose saints for heavenly blessings before the foundation of the world (Ephesians p.193).

What is the meaning of God's elect? "It is not simply a statement of fact, or something that proclaims the purpose of God also. Like the word "first begotten", which denotes privilege and dignity, the word "elect" is a word used for believers. It does not simply speak of deliverance from perdition"<sup>9</sup>.

Sir Robert Anderson asks and answers: What is, in plain words, the practical difficulty of election in its bearing upon the gospel? Why, that at some epoch in the past, God decided that this or that individual was to be saved or lost; and, therefore, that his future depends, not on the present action of the grace or the righteousness of the living God Who can appeal through the gospel to his heart and conscience, but on what is nothing more or less than an iron decree of fate. May not the whole difficulty depend on the arrogant supposition that God Himself is bound by the same laws that He has imposed upon His creatures? But whatever we may think of the theories of Kant, this at least is certain, that there is no deception in the gospel as proclaimed by God to men. "Truth is one" ; and though, to our finite minds, election and grace may seem as far as the poles asunder, and as antagonistic as the magnetic currents which set toward them ; to the Infinite they may appear but inseparable parts of one great whole. Every truth has its own place ; and there is no more reason why grace should be denied by dragging election into the gospel, than why election should be denied, because, when so thrust out of its proper sphere, it seems to be opposed to grace. "Rightly dividing the Word of truth," is a precept which we need to remember here.

I repeat "there is no deception in the gospel"<sup>10</sup>

The truth of the scripture is that the Lord Jesus Christ died on the cross for all mankind to accomplish the redemption of all who trust in him. C.H. Spurgeon wrote: "In Christ's finished work I can see an ocean of merit; my plummet finds no bottom, my eye discerns no shore"

We see that the time and purpose of election of Israel and the Church are different.

- Israel was chosen in Abraham, but the Church was chosen in Christ, and not to be put into Christ.
- Abraham was chosen in time and Israel in Abraham, but the Church was chosen before the foundation of the world.
- Israel was chosen to be God's people on the earth, but the Church was chosen to be the heavenly people of God.
- The blessing of Israel was earthly, but if the Church it is heavenly.
- The blessings of God on Abraham and Israel were material, but of the Church are spiritual.
- Israel's blessing was temporal and of the church it is eternal.

We can boldly proclaim the gospel that all those who repent and believe will be saved. God has not marked out some for salvation and some for damnation.

## IV. PREDESTINATION

A similar word to 'election' is 'predestination'. In theology these two words are used as synonyms sometimes. Scripture is communicated to us "not in words which man's wisdom

teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches comparing spiritual things with spiritual (1 Cor.2.13). This is inspiration. Not only all scripture is inspired but every word also is inspired. We should not confuse the words which the Holy Spirit has communicated to us but distinguish the things that differ. Scripture never uses 'election' and 'predestination' synonymously, yet they are closely related. Election has to do with the persons involved and predestination with the purpose involved. The same amount of confusion about the doctrine of election, if not more, prevails about this doctrine also.

According to W. E. Vine: The verb "proorizo" (predestinate) is to be distinguished from "proginosko" (to foreknow); the latter has special reference to the persons foreknown by God; proorizo has special reference to that to which the subjects of His foreknowledge are 'predestinated'<sup>11</sup>.

Yet there are those who teach that foreknowledge was the same as predestination. This is because they hold the extremist view of God's sovereignty which denied the human will. This was Augustine's view. In His book the 'Gift of Perseverance' (p.47) he writes "Consequently, sometimes the same predestination is signified also under the name of foreknowledge. *"This extreme view makes God the author of every event and thus even of all sin"*<sup>12</sup>. Calvin follows on the same line as Augustine: *"Now...God...arrange all things...If God merely foresaw human events, and did not also arrange and dispose of them at his pleasure, there might be room for agitating the question, how far his foreknowledge amounts to necessity; but since....he has decreed that they are so to happen.....it is clear that all events take place by his sovereign appointment"*<sup>13</sup>. According to Calvin God could foresee the future because He has willed it. How can the God of Love predestine vast multitudes to eternal damnation without allowing them any choice?

The extreme view of God's sovereignty is only denial of God's infinite love. To say that "the very damnation of perhaps billions foreordained by God from eternity past, because it pleases and glorifies God" is nothing but caricaturing God as a cruel sadist.

But what do the Scriptures say? "As I live, says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn you from your evil ways; for why will you die O house of Israel (Ezk.33.11).

How beautiful the proclamation of God compared to man. Man said "crucify Him, crucify Him". But God says: Let him live! "Doctrines of reprobation were once very popular. Many believe that God destined the greater part of mankind to eternal misery before they were born in order to magnify his own glory". The pagans have had ideas of gods who delighted in blood. But is there a certain divine satisfaction in taking vengeance on the sinner? God poured out his wrath of the sin of man on his Divine substitute because He loved man. God warns sternly but repentance on the part of man turns his wrath away from him. To man revenge may be sweet, but it is not so with God. God's love is a grand contradiction to theological pessimism.

Jerusalem acted harshly against the prophets of God. They deserved death for their rebellion. Yet Jesus Christ lamented: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that kills the prophets, and stones them which are sent unto thee, how often I would have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and you would not" (Matt.23.37).

See what The Westminster Confession of Faith declares: *“By the decree of God, for the manifestation of his glory, some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting fire; and others foreordained to everlasting death. Those of mankind that are predestinated unto God, God has chosen in Christ unto everlasting glory to the praise of His glorious grace. The rest of mankind, God was pleased, according to the unsearchable counsel of his own will for the glory of his sovereign power over his creatures to ordain them to dishonor and wrath for their sin, to the praise of his glorious justice”*<sup>14</sup>. What a terrible thing it is to attribute such terrible acts to the God of love.

George L. Bryson, in his Five Points of Calvinism asks this pertinent question: “And since the unregenerate are reprobate (predestined to damnation by God’s decree) as a result of a choice made by God alone how could they be responsible for their lost condition and inevitable damnation”?

Why would God who is love and rich in mercy, of his sovereign will let billions go to hell, when He could have rescued them. Why would men reject God’s gift of salvation when it is offered by grace? We have no clear and definite answer to these questions. At the same it is true that God is sovereign and man is responsible. The Creator has allowed the freedom of choice to sinful man. He would definitely respect this moral freedom of choice bestowed by Him to man and will not put forth His sovereign hand to destroy what he has bestowed.

I do not claim to know the answer to this tension between God’s sovereignty and man’s responsibility and do not try to reconcile these truths taught in the scriptures. Many have said “let them lay side by side”. But could it be true that when these two meet together a sinner is gloriously born again?

The word “predestination” has been used in the New Testament only four times. Rom.8.29 “For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate, to be conformed to the image of His Son. Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called. This verse teaches that God has predestinated some. Who are they? For what purpose are they predestined? Is it for eternal life? Scripture teaches that everyone who is born of God is a child of God. Only those who believe will become children of God (Jn.1.12, 13). A child of God receives the Spirit of adoption and is thus adopted into the family of God. And every such child is predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son. Predestination is not for eternal life. But it is those who have received eternal life who are predestined. This verse teaches clearly that believers are predestined to be conformed to the image of the Son of God.

*“Every link in the chain is perfect except that which connects its first link, the election to eternal life with the unconditional decree of God”*<sup>15</sup>— foreknowledge – predestination- calling – justification - glorification. Why is this so? This is only because there is no such thing as an unconditional decree for eternal life. To apply the “determinate counsel of God” concerning the Son of God, to believers’ election for salvation, as some do, is doing violence to the Scriptures (cf. Acts 2:23).

Robert McClurkin comments: *“All men are called by the call of the gospel and those who respond to the call are predestinated, not to go anywhere, but be something. They are called, then justified and then glorified in the purposes of God”*<sup>16</sup>.

Eph.1.5 “Having predestinated us unto the adoption of Children by Jesus Christ to himself”. Here again predestination is for a purpose – to the adoption. As I was writing this, a question was put to me: “does not adoption take place at the time of salvation? So can we not say ‘predestinated unto adoption’ is the same as ‘predestinated to eternal life’?” My answer is: When we repent and put our trust in God, we are saved. Many things happen simultaneously when we are saved (we are saved, redeemed, justified, regenerated, adopted, sanctified etc). It is very difficult to list a chronological order in which these things happen. But there is a logical order. Look to the following scripture: “Because we are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying “Abba Father (Gal.4.6). Logically, therefore, salvation comes before adoption. “Adoption” (Gk. huiothesia) means placing as a son, is not so much a word of relationship as of position. In regeneration a Christian receives the nature of a child of God; in adoption he receives the position of a son of God”<sup>17</sup>. W.E. Vine explains: “adoption signifies the place and condition of a son given to one to whom it does not naturally belong”. Therefore “predestined unto adoption” is not the same as “predestined to eternal life”. Only those who receive eternal life are predestined unto adoption.

Eph.1.11 “In him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will”. This verse teaches that being predestinated we have received an inheritance. And the purpose of our predestination in this context is that we should be to the praise of His glory. No unsaved man was ever predestinated to anything<sup>18</sup>.

In his book, “All the Doctrines of the Bible” Herbert Lockyer writes: *Predestination is not God’s predetermining from past ages who should and who should not be saved. Scripture does not teach this view. Predestination concerns the future of believers. It is the divine determining the glorious consummation of all who through faith and surrender become the Lord’s*<sup>19</sup>.

There is no predestination either to heaven or hell; either to eternal life or eternal punishment. This teaching is not found in the Scriptures and is therefore unscriptural.

### A. PREDESTINATION AND FREEWILL

God is sovereign. He has made the offer of salvation to all who are willing to accept it. He has no pleasure in the death of the wicked and does not will that anyone should perish but come to repentance. But can man accept the offer that God has made? Is his will free to accept it?

Bondage of the will: There are those who teach that man is dead spiritually and his will is in bondage. You need to know about the man Augustine to know about his theology.

Augustine was born in 354 to middle class parents, Patricius, a pagan and Monica, a devout Roman Catholic at Tagaste in North Africa. Yet they were able to give him good education locally and then at Madura and Carthage (371-75). Augustine fell into moral sin. A little discipline in sexuality occurred only by an unofficial marriage in 372 which lasted until 385. Augustine was converted to philosophy, became disillusioned with the Bible and his search for truth made him an adherent to Manichaeism. The rationalism of Mani, who was born in AD 216 in Babylon, appealed to him. A decade later, after he met Faustus of Melevis, one of the proponents of Manichaeism he parted company with them and turned to Neo-Platonism being denuded of the charm of the intellectual pretensions of Manichaeism. He later became a prey to the learned eloquence and allegorism of Ambrose. After his conversion and baptism he “formed a fellowship of the ‘servants of God’ committed to contemplative philosophy”. After becoming the bishop of

Hyppo his outlook changed. His, *The Confessions*, interpret his past. The words of Scripture: “Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in rivalry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts” (Rom.13.13, 14) left no doubt in his heart. He knew how he was a slave of sin completely and was converted.

“His theology ripened in controversy. (First it was with the Donatists). Against the Manichaeans he defended the goodness of creation quo being, defining evil as absence of good and ascribing sin to abuse of freewill, and he developed a rationale of faith as evoked by the impressive authority of the universal church and leading to understanding”<sup>20</sup>. The last greatest controversy that Augustine had with the heretic Pelagius, a native of the British Isles.

### **The theology of Augustine**

His past life and conversion left an indelible mark in his life. He knew that there was no way he could have saved himself and it was only by the grace of God. It is to this “doctrine of grace’ to which Augustinianism as a theological system most commonly refers”<sup>21</sup>.

Augustine mentions in his *Confessions*, that his prayer “Give what thou commandest and command what thou will” left no room in the humanistic theology of Pelagius . He argued that if God gave men commands, then he also gave them the ability to work those commands. God will have to grant him what was expected from him.

When Pelagius said with confidence: “I ought therefore I can” Augustine said in despair: “I ought, but I cannot”. According to him man is sinful that he cannot cooperate in his own salvation. Then why are some saved and yet others unsaved? Augustine said: God has predestined some for eternal life. To these God gives the ability to desire and to believe in Christ. It is because of God’s choice and not their own! As for those who are not saved, it is because they are predestined for damnation. The human will is in bondage.

“Pelagius had taught that grace is not necessary for salvation, though it may be of help. Man, of his own free will, can do good, and can be good. Men only become sinners as they sin, and are born a blank slate. Coelestius, Pelagius’ main disciple, summarized Pelagianism in nine points...

1) That Adam was created mortal, for he would have died no matter whether he had sinned or not. 2) That Adam’s sin injured him only, and not all of humankind. 3) That the Law, as well as the Gospel, leads to the Kingdom. 4) That there were some before the time of Christ who lived without sin. 5) That recently born infants are in the same state as was Adam before the fall. 6) That the whole of humankind does not die in the death (of fall) of Adam, nor does it resurrect in the resurrection of Christ. 7) That, if we will, we can live without sin. 8) That unbaptized infants attain unto eternal life. 9) That the rich who are baptized will have no merit, nor will they inherit the Kingdom of God, if they do not renounce their possessions”

### **B. FOREKNOWLEDGE AND FREEWILL**

In many minds there seems to be a conflict between God’s foreknowledge and man’s freewill. God knows everything and his knowledge is perfect. God knows everything before it happens. Therefore it must happen. David, speaking of the omniscience of God, said: “There is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, Lord, thou know it altogether” (Ps.139.4). “Known unto God are all his

works from the beginning of the word” (Acts 15.18). God is the same yesterday, today and forever (Heb.13.8). From the time God began creation (Gen.1.1) he introduced time, space and matter. Time is part of this physical universe but He is beyond time. He lives in His eternal presence. Therefore God sees yesterday, today and tomorrow as if it happens today. Surprisingly it is Jacob Arminius who fully explains this foreknowledge of God: *“God knows all things possible, whether they be in the capability of God or of the creature...imagination or enunciation...all things that could have an existence...those who are necessary and contingent, good and bad, universal and particular, future, present, and past, excellent and vile. He knows things substantial and accidental of every kind; the actions and passions of modes and circumstances...external words and deeds, internal thoughts, deliberations, counsels and determinations, and the entities of reason, whether complex or simple”*<sup>22</sup>. But it was John Calvin who went ahead and said: “If God did not foreordain all things, then he could not know the future”. We have no basis whatever in the Scripture to say that God knows everything because he has foreordained it. But it is right to say that His foreordination is consistent with His foreknowledge.

In the Garden of Eden God revealed his benevolence (“you may freely eat”), his sovereignty (“thou shall not eat”) and severity (“you shall die”) to Adam when he was put on probation. Adam had the free will to obey or to disobey. Adam disobeyed and sinned and since then Adam and his progeny have had this bias towards evil. At times he did good things but he continued in sin. He lost his will to continually put his preference to God instead of self. Gospel in the hands of God is an effective instrument to persuade man to forsake his preference to self and sin and turn to God for salvation. But man must exercise his will and repent and believe the gospel for salvation. Our Lord Jesus said these words: “If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it is of God, or whether I speak of myself” (Jn.7.17). This verse clearly teaches that man can will to do the will of God. Jesus Christ said that repentance and remission of sin should be preached in His name (Lk.24.47). Man must forsake sin and preference to self to turn towards God.

In His foreknowledge God knows the future and knows that sinners must face the final judgment. His love does not desire that this should be so. He raised up His prophets and sent them to Israel time and again to forsake their evil ways and turn to Him for salvation. He also knows the consequences of rejection and gave warning to them. Since God alone knows the future, His love demands that He give the warning to His creatures. This He has done. He is the One “declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand and I will do all my pleasure (Isa.46.9-10). Man must believe the Word of God and exercise his free will to accept the offer of God. God cannot and He will not compel a sinner to believe. Man of his own free will, will not return to God. He is depraved. In this situation, God takes the initiative. Gospel of God is the initiative and the power of God. When it is preached: Faith comes by hearing the Word (Rom.10.17). The Spirit of God uses the Word of God to convict the sinner of sin, righteousness and judgment (John 16:7-11).

### **C. FOREKNOWLEDGE IS PREDESTINATION?**

Calvin’s belief is the denial that God’s foreknowledge has nothing to do with his knowing in advance but is equal to predestination. A. W. Pink in his Doctrine of Election and Justification says, “God foreknows what will be because He has decreed what shall be”. This is also exactly what John Calvin says: “God foreknew what the end of man was to be because he had so ordained by his decree”. Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to

the image of his son. We are not told what exactly is this “foreknowledge”? The obvious meaning would be God foreknew who would repent and believe the gospel and he predestinated them for certain purpose. C. H. Spurgeon says: “Mark, then, with care that OUR CONFORMITY TO CHRIST IS THE SACRED OBJECT OF PREDESTINATION...The Lord in boundless grace has resolved that a company whom no man can number...shall be restored to His image, in the particular form in which His Eternal Son displays it...the likeness of the Lord from heaven”. What we understand from this is that God’s predestination is in perfect harmony with his foreknowledge and not as some says: “to know in advance means to determine in advance”.

Even John MacArthur in his ‘Saved without a Doubt’, writes, “*God’s foreknowledge, therefore, is not a reference to His omniscient foresight but to his foreordination...God does indeed foresee who is going to be a believer, but the faith He foresees is the faith He himself creates. It is not that He merely sees what will happen in the future; rather He ordains it. The Bible clearly teaches that God sovereignly chooses people to believe in Him*”<sup>23</sup>. Dave Hunt comments: “God takes into account what He by His foreknowledge knows will be the actions and reactions of men. He did not cause Judas to betray Christ, nor did He cause the Jews to reject Him or the Romans to crucify Him. However, He did arrange that these particular individuals who would act in that manner were on the scene at the right time to fulfill His will through their willing ignorance and/or evil” (p.226)

In the Old Testament, in some cases, sexual intercourse is expressed in the word “knew”, e.g. “Adam knew (Heb. yada) his wife” (Gen.4.1), “Cain knew (yada) his wife (4.17). Attempts have been made to take the word *yada* to equate it with the N.T. word *proginosko* (foreknowledge), and to suggest that *proginosko* not only means God’s foreknowledge but also that those God foreknew, i.e. “whom God loved beforehand”, he predestinated.

Dave Hunt writes: “*Yada is used for “knowing” in a variety of ways, most often for general knowledge. Only in that generic sense would it be related to proginosko, which also had to do with knowledge. While yada is at times used to denote a special relationship – “I did know thee in the wilderness” (Hosea 13.5), “You only have I known of all the families of the earth” (Amos 3.2) - never does it mean to know in advance, whereas that is the principle meaning of proginosko and prognosis. There is therefore, no relationship between these words which would be of any help in supporting Calvinism. Further, to “know” one’s wife in a sexual way could not be before the fact, nor does God “know” man in that manner*”<sup>24</sup>. God definitely did not know man in this fashion.

Yet in spite of these clear statements in the Scriptures, to some at least, there are some difficult portions to understand. We would look at some of these:

## V. SOME DIFFICULTIES

### A. THE CASE OF BELIEVERS IN ANTIOCH

Wherever the gospel is preached and the Spirit of God works there one of two things always happens. There will be those who believe and others who do not. Apostle Paul preached in Thessalonica and some of them believed but there were also Jews who believed not who persecuted Paul (Acts 17.1-5). The same thing happened in Antioch of Pisidia also (Acts 13.14-48). Many of the Jews and religious proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas. On the next Sabbath

the whole city came together to hear the word and when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy and spoke against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming (v.45). Paul told them that “since you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold we turn to the gentiles”. But when the Gentiles heard this they were glad and glorified the word of the Lord. The only way to glorify the word of God is to accept it and believe it. What the Jews refused to believe the Gentiles did. “And as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed”. They were favorably disposed to believe the gospel. The Greek Scholar W. E. Vine comments: “It is said of those who, having believed the gospel, were ordained to eternal life” (Expository Dictionary, pg. 34).

It should be noted here that they were not “pre-ordained” or “predestined” to eternal life. It is only God who can fore-ordain and predestine. On the contrary, Vine comments pertinently that it is after they believed the gospel they were ordained to eternal life. “Among the gentiles they found ‘those who set themselves in place for eternal life’. This correctly renders the middle verb (in this tense middle and passive coincide). Ordained of course is not theologically loaded. It meant “set in place” in the English of the time”<sup>25</sup>. He adds: In the active voice the subject does an action; in the passive voice the subject has something done to it. Greek, in many verbs, has another voice called the middle voice, in which the subject both acts and is acted upon; that is, the subject acts directly or indirectly in itself. It has been explained in this way: ‘The middle voice chiefly signifies that a person has a special interest in the effects of the action, that he is acting either upon, or for himself, or that when he is acting for others he has a personal interest in their condition or welfare’. The grammar of the middle voice is complex and no simple rule can be given in respect of it. The context is very important in deciding the meaning” (p.17, 18).

The Greek word TASSO translated as “appointed”, or “ordained” has been translated differently in the following verses and would make the meaning more clear. It is said of the household of Stephanas, that “they have devoted (Tasso) themselves to the ministry of the saints (NKJV) (addicted KJV) (1 Cor.16.15). If anyone has “ordained” the house of Stephanas to the ministry of the saints, it is themselves and not anyone else. Similarly, it is said of the brethren who “determined” (Tasso) that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem (Acts 15.2).

The question of fore-ordination or even ordination by God of some for eternal life cannot be established from Acts 13.48. The Jews “judged themselves unworthy of eternal life”. Eternal life is offered to all freely, and it was also offered to Jews in Antioch through the words preached to them. But they contradicting and blaspheming opposed Paul. Thus they judged themselves unworthy of eternal life. There is also no hint in verse 46 that the Jews were reprobated by God by His decree. The condemnation of the Jews and the blessings received by the Gentiles in Acts 13 are the consequences of their decisions based upon the word of God.

### **B. THE CASE OF PHARAOH**

Rom.9.17, 18: Whom he will, he hardens – The case of Pharaoh. Is this work of God arbitrary? God’s desire is to have mercy upon all (Rom.11.32). But can he show mercy upon him who refuses his mercy? God says: My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, says the Lord. What is God’s way? If the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous his thoughts and then returns to the Lord, God will have mercy on him (Isa.55.7, 8). God created man with a free will. If man refuses to listen to God’s instructions God has no alternative but to

give up men for their own choices. This is exactly what happened to pagan idol worshippers. God gave them over because of their persistent refusal to hear him (Rom.1.19-32).

God does not purposely harden anyone's heart. He is not the author of sin. On Isaiah 45:7, ("I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil. I the Lord do all these things") Scofield comments: "God is not the author of sin (Hab.1.13; 2 Tim.2.13; Tit.1.2; Jas.1.13; 1 Jn.1.5). One of the meanings of the Hebrew word 'ra' carries the idea of adversity or calamity, and it is evidently so employed here. God has made sorrow and wretchedness to be the sure fruits of sin<sup>26</sup>.

God does not want to forsake His children. Even when God gave Israel over to their own hearts' lust his desire was that they would listen to Him. The classic example of Jonah illustrates to us the mercy of God. Jonah was asked to preach: "Yet forty days and Nineveh will be overthrown" (Jonah 3.4). God was going to Judge Nineveh. But Nineveh believed God and repented. God saw their works and their return from their evil way and he did not destroy Nineveh.

God has spoken to Israel earlier that, "At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up and to pull down, and to destroy it; if that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them" (Jer.18.7,8). Jonah knew this and when Nineveh repented and God did not destroy Nineveh, he confessed: "O, Lord, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish: for I knew that thou art a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and of great kindness and repent thee of the evil" (Jonah.4.2). God will have mercy on whom he will have mercy. But they are those who plead for mercy. In the case of the Publican and the Pharisee God was merciful to the publican who prayed for it but the Pharisee who justified himself did not receive it because he refused it (Lk.189-14).

The God of the Hebrews told Pharaoh through Moses again and again, "Let my people go to worship me" but he refused to hear and hardened his heart. When Pharaoh persistently hardened his heart the Lord hardened his heart i.e. the Lord allowed Pharaoh to harden his heart. "The overall effect of God's actions was that Pharaoh was confirmed in his obduracy". I shall harden the heart of Pharaoh means; I know that I shall be the cause of Pharaoh's obstinacy: my commandments and wonders will be an occasion, an inducement to an increasing obduration of his heart"<sup>27</sup>.

Alexander Maclaren explains: "God hardens no man's heart who has not first hardened it himself. We do not need to conclude that any inward action on the will is meant. Was not the accumulation of plagues, intended, as they were to soften a cause of hardening? The same fire softens wax and hardens clay....Pharaoh's obstinacy had not thwarted the divine purpose but had been the dark background against the blaze of God's irresistible grace might shone brighter. He turns opposition into the occasion of more conspicuously putting forth his omnipotence" (Exodus, p.36).

God does not purposely, indiscriminately and capriciously harden the heart of anyone. He is a merciful God. He is rich in mercy (Eph.2.4) and he is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved (Rom.10:12, 13).

### C. THE CASE OF THE DIVINE POTTER

The Lord will have mercy on whom he will, but His mercy is under His sovereign will. “Has not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor”? (Rom.9.21). But does God exercise His sovereign will capriciously?

The Lord asked Jeremiah to go to the Potter’s house to teach him an object lesson (Jer.18.1-6). The vessel was marred in the hands of the potter but he made it again another vessel as seemed good to him. And then the Lord asked the question: O house of Israel, can not I do with you as this potter? In Chapters 18 and 19 the Lord not only explains His sovereign will but also His sovereign grace. The sovereign grace of God is able to make the marred vessel and make it again a vessel of usefulness. Because of the sin of Judah God will ‘break this people and this city, as one breaks a potter’s vessel, that cannot be made again’ (Jer.19.11). “To the elders, in Chapter 19, the prophet declares that their generation will be irreparably destroyed like a smashed fragile vessel, and the fragments taken to Babylon. That generation of the nation was not restored to the land (19.10-13)”<sup>28</sup>.

God will do as he pleases, because He is sovereign, has no idea of fatalism contained in it. God warned the men of Judah of impending judgment and asked them to turn back from their evil way (18.11). But they refused to do so (v.12). God’s action in using the clay to make another useful vessel depended either on the obedience or disobedience of Judah. It is for God to decide as to how the obedience (a vessel of honor) or disobedience (a vessel of dishonor) will fit to his future plan.

Men are made of clay, but they are not clay pots. They are made in the image of God and have a free will to decide. Campbell in his book, ‘This was his faith’, p.212, writes: “I remember always that God created man in His own image and likeness, which means, among other things, having the magnificent and yet awe-inspiring power and freedom of the will. Man has used that will in rebellion, and suffering and wrong is the result of man’s action. I say it with profound reverence that God, by the very nature of the case, cannot prevent these things, but He is over ruling them”. God cannot prevent because he will not. God allows man to exercise his free will, and if it is exercised in rebellion, as man often does, God over rules and still accomplishes his purpose.

Even to the church at Laodicea, the Lord said: Behold I stand and at the door and knock, if any man hear my voice and open the door I will come in to him and will sup with him, and he with me” (Rev.3.20). He will not push the door open. God respects the free will of man which God has endowed upon him. And yet He is sovereign.

### D. THE CASE OF JACOB

When Rebecca conceived and the children struggled together within her she went to enquire of the Lord: The Lord said unto her: “Two nations are in thy womb, and two manners of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder (greater) shall serve the younger (lesser)” (Gen.25.21-23). Even from a cursory reading of the text it is clear that the Lord was not speaking of Esau and Jacob, but of two Nations, Edom and Israel.

In Romans Nine Paul is dealing with the election of Israel as a Nation. He distinguishes between the children of the flesh and the children of promise. Isaac is the child of promise. Of

his two children, Esau and Jacob God chose Jacob, so that the purpose of God according to election might stand (v.11). As was pointed out earlier the redemption of Israel was national and not personal. Here too Jacob was not chosen for salvation and neither was Esau chosen for condemnation. The Lord was speaking of two nations Edom and Israel and whom God has chosen. The purpose of this was already mentioned.

The word of God has not failed (9.6). God is sovereign and he has determined that the word would be fulfilled not in the entire nation, but a smaller group within the nation, the remnant. This is not election to salvation. Jacob was not chosen because of his good qualities or because of his works. The election was done even before the children could do anything good or bad. (9.11).

The next quotation, “Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated” is taken not from the book of Genesis but from Malachi (1.2, 3). Here again the Lord speaks of Esau and his mountains and his heritage, i.e. the nations than the two brothers.

Our God is a God of love and he can never hate anyone. The author himself had a great struggle early in his Christian life. When he called me to his service and I was reluctant because of my family, my Lord did speak to me: “If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife and children and brethren and sisters yes, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple” (Lk.14.26). After weeks of struggle and prayer the Lord clarified: “He that loves father and mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me” (Matt.10.37). In the words of hate and love, the Lord has shown his preference of Jacob than Esau in working out his purposes. To Israel was promised the Messiah and the Kingdom, and the earthly and temporal blessings. In choosing Jacob God is working out this plan.

### **E. THE SALVATION IN THESSALONIANS**

Concerning their salvation Paul writes: “The gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance....and having received the word in much affliction with joy of the Holy Spirit...and they turned to God from idols to serve the living God and true God; and to wait for his Son from heaven” (1 Thes.1.5,6,9,10). This is how they were saved.

Writing to the Thessalonians in his Second Epistle the Apostle says that “God has from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth, whereunto he called you by our gospel” (2 Thes.2.13, 14). In this chapter the apostle writes about the Day of the Lord and the man of sin. The man of sin will be revealed only after the rapture of the Church and who believed not the truth will be damned (v.12). But the believers in Thessalonica will be saved, i.e. delivered from the wrath of God. He earlier wrote to them in the first epistle that “God has not appointed us unto wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thes.5.9).

Jesus Christ comes again to consummate salvation. They will be physically delivered from the presence of sin and the wrath of God. This is the salvation mentioned in the above verse.

### **F. THE FULLNESS OF THE GENTILES**

“Blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in” (Rom.11.25). There are those who teach that “fullness of the gentiles” here mean that God has

ordained many for eternal salvation and they are marked out as such, and the blindness of the Jews would persist till the last one of the Gentiles so marked out by God for salvation is saved.

It is true that in this age God visits “the Gentiles to take out of them a people for his name” which is the Church which is his body (Acts 15.14). It is also equally true that till the partial blindness of Israel is removed at the national conversion of Israel, individual Jews also form part of this body. The last of the Gentiles will be saved, as we have seen before, not because they are predestined (marked out) for salvation, but because they repent and believe the gospel.

### **G. REGENERATION BEFORE BELIEF?**

Since man is dead in sins and trespasses, should life be imparted to him before he exercises his free will and believes the gospel? In other words, is regeneration the prerequisite to belief?

‘If man is dead in his sins and he cannot exercise his free will to accept the salvation offered by God because of his condition, God has to impart life to him before he can believe’ argues some.. After the fall Adam was dead in sins. He is spiritually dead. He was not regenerated. Yet he could hear the voice of God. The concept of regeneration is introduced only in the New Testament.

There are those who teach that regeneration or new birth must precede faith. This is because according to them a spiritually dead man is unable to respond and he must be born again before he can do so. God with His irresistible grace draws them unto him to do the regenerative work in them. R. C. Sproul writes: “In regeneration, God changes our hearts. He gives us a new disposition, a new inclination. He plants a desire for Christ in our hearts. We can never trust Christ for our salvation unless we first desire Him. This is why we said earlier that regeneration precedes faith”

In a similar vein, concerning regeneration Reformed psychologist Jas Adams writes: “*Only God can bring life to dead souls to enable them to believe. He does this when and where and how He pleases by His Spirit, who regenerates, or gives life leading to faith. As a reformed Christian, the writer believes that counselors must not tell any unsaved counselee that Christ died for him, for they cannot say that. No man knows except Christ Himself who are His elect for whom he died*”<sup>29</sup>

There are also those who teach that predestination is a secret, family doctrine and must not be preached to sinners. Bible is an open book and is for all men everywhere.

But what says the scriptures? New birth takes place only after an unregenerate man puts his faith in Christ. How does this happen? The Holy Spirit convicts the sinner (Cf. Jn.16.7-11); he is enlightened by the living and powerful Word, which produces faith in him (Rom.10.17) and exercise faith in the finished work of Christ. That moment he is regenerated, and all the spiritual blessings are bestowed upon him.

### **H. DOES THE FATHER IRRESISTIBLY DRAW A PERSON TO CHRIST?**

*Jn.6.44:- No man can come to me, except the Father which has sent me draw him*

*Jn. 5.40:- And you will not come to me that ye might have life.*

The above two scriptures seems to contradict one another. But do they?

The Jews refused to believe the witness of the Lord Jesus Christ. Then Jesus Christ put before them the five fold witness, (1) of the Holy Spirit (Jn.5.32); (2) John the Baptist (vv.33-35); His own works (v.36); the witness of the Father (vv.37-38); and the witness of the Scriptures (v.39). They searched the Scriptures and thought in it they have eternal life. But they failed to find Christ (eternal life is in Him) in the Scriptures because they refused its witness.

How does the Father draw a person to Christ? He uses the written word, the testimony of the Scriptures by the power of the Holy Spirit. The picture that the Holy Spirit draws of Christ in the Word of God is very attractive. As the Shunamite said: My beloved is white and ruddy...He is the chiefest among ten thousands" (Song 5.10). As the Father revealed to Peter the truth that the Son is "the Christ the Son of the Living God", He presents the attractiveness of His Son (his person and his work) to a sinner and draws him to him. But if any refused to believe this there is no forgiveness. A demon possessed man, blind and dumb, was brought to Christ Matt.12.22-32). When the demon was cast out, the blind and dumb spoke and saw. Some confessed that Jesus Christ is the Son of David, the Messiah. It was the work of the Spirit that enabled them to witness this. Others refused to believe and attributed the miracle to Beelzebub. Jesus said this blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. It is because those refused the witness of the Holy Spirit and thus refused to receive forgiveness.

Father does not irresistibly draw a sinner to Christ against that person's will.

The Lord also said " and I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me (John 12:32)". These two verses are complimentary. The Father uses the crucified picture of the Son to draw men unto Him.

## VI. CONCLUSION

God is sovereign and man is responsible. No attempt is made in this thesis to reconcile these two. Yet it is clear that God will not, and therefore cannot exercise his sovereignty inconsistent with His nature. Man is sinful. His bias towards evil is so strong that he of his own accord (will) will not turn to God for salvation.

God has chosen Christ to be the savior of the world. He accomplished the work of salvation when He died on the Cross and rose again on the third day. The gospel invitation is that whosoever will may come and believe the gospel. The Spirit of God convicts the sinner of his sin and is persuaded to forsake sin and turn to Christ and be saved. God wants all men to be saved and yet all are not saved. Why is this? Good seed, the word of God, is sown by the Son of man. Some falls on the way side and the birds pick it up; some falls among thorns and the plant is choked up by them; some falls on rocky soil and when the sun comes up it wither away; only that which is fallen on good ground produced fruit. This is the case when the living word produces faith and the sinner repents and turns to Christ. He is regenerated and born again. Jesus said: "No man can come to me, except the Father which has sent me draw him". This the Father does to all when the Spirit of God presents the gospel and persuades him. But the Father does not irresistibly draw him against his own will.



## ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Dictionary of the Christian Church; pg.177
- <sup>2</sup> Dictionary of the Christian Church.; pg.126
- <sup>3</sup> History of the Christian Church-Philip Schaff, Volume 8; pg. 220,221
- <sup>4</sup> Stereological Implications of Five point Calvinism, essay by F. Congdon; pg.8
- <sup>5</sup> New Dictionary of Theology, IVP; pg.571
- <sup>6</sup> Five Points of Calvinism, by Edwin H. Palmer; pg.24-25
- <sup>7</sup> The Believer's Magazine: April, 1998
- <sup>8</sup> The Dawn of the World Redemption, by Eric Saur; pg.90
- <sup>9</sup> Sir Robert Anderson, Gospel and Its Ministry; pg.76
- <sup>10</sup> Sir Robert Anderson, Gospel and Its Ministry; pg.78
- <sup>11</sup> Quoted by John F. Parkinson, The Faith of God's Elect; pg.37.
- <sup>12</sup> What Love is This, by Dave Hunt; pg.40
- <sup>13</sup> Quoted in 'What Love is this?', by Dave Hunt; pg.40
- <sup>14</sup> Quoted in 'What Love is this?', by Dave Hunt; pg.100
- <sup>15</sup> A Theodicy, A. T. Blesdose; p.323
- <sup>16</sup> Election and Freewill; p.36
- <sup>17</sup> Scofield Reference Bible- Notes on Eph.1.5,
- <sup>18</sup> The Other Side of Calvinism; pg.218
- <sup>19</sup> All the Doctrines of the Bible" by Herbert Lockyer; pg.153
- <sup>20</sup> History of the Christian Church; p.87
- <sup>21</sup> New Dictionary of Theology; p.61
- <sup>22</sup> Quoted by David Hunt from The Works of James Arminius; pg.144
- <sup>23</sup> Saved without a Doubt", quoted by: Dave Hunt; p.58
- <sup>24</sup> What love is this?, by Dave Hunt; pg.227
- <sup>25</sup> Chosen in Christ, by James L. Crookes, John Ritchie Ltd; pg.17
- <sup>26</sup> Scofield Reference Bible; pg.752
- <sup>27</sup> Chosen in Christ, James L. Crookes, John Ritchie Publications; pg.37, 38
- <sup>28</sup> Scofield Reference Bible; pg 789
- <sup>29</sup> Quoted by David Dunlop, in 'Limiting Omnipotence'; pg.122, 123