The Purpose of Election in Romans 9:11: Rethinking the Doctrine of Predestination Through the Theology of the Cross

by

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Wycliffe College and the Theological Department of the Toronto School of Theology In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Theology awarded by the University of St. Michael’s College

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Doctor of Philosophy in Theology
University of St. Michael’s College
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Abstract

The renewed interest in the reading of Romans 9-11 over recent decades is indicative of the attempt to settle the controversy concerning the doctrine of double predestination. In reference to Luther’s directive that the theology of the cross be the lens through which all other doctrines be examined, and based on the “New Perspective” on Paul’s writings and his Jewish background, this dissertation reassesses the Reformed doctrine of predestination through Paul’s convictions concerning the cross and his theological reading of the Old Testament.

Accordingly, this study establishes that the primary principle which Paul underscores within the context of Romans 9 is that the cross is the supreme expression of God’s purpose of election. The cross of Christ not only is a statement about God’s determination in election, but it also has an existential purpose in its ways and works. Furthermore, the readers of Romans 9 will recognize that when Paul discusses election, he engages a specifically Trinitarian articulation of God, who works out His election of grace in a definite yet surprising manner. Such a reassessed scriptural perspective on the purpose of election is clearly stated in Paul’s understanding of God’s unfolding promises of redemption for both Jews and Gentiles through the suffering Christ. Since the correlation between election and
the cross is held together in Christ through His crucifixion, my proposition is to put
“cruciform election” foremost in our understanding of predestination. Thus, cruciform
election becomes the essence in explicating the purpose of God according to election in
Romans 9:11. Correspondingly, the cruciform reading of predestination presents the eternal
decision of God, vested in the immanent Trinity, in which Christ is elected to accomplish
human salvation through the atonement of the cross. The ultimate goal is that God’s purpose
of election be revealed existentially in the elect community.
Acknowledgements

Three distinct inspirations come to mind as I write this page. First is the life-long quest and passion for learning inculcated by my parents since my youth. Little did I ever imagine that someday their promptings would spur me to finish my doctorate at the retirement age of sixty-nine. Second is how my dear wife, Lillian, continues to provide support throughout our forty-three years of marriage, by allotting me time and space while sustaining the aspiration to fulfill not only our ministry goals, but at the same time to pursue two doctoral studies. Thirdly, I am grateful for my dissertation supervisor, Dr. Ephraim Radner. I am sincerely indebted to him for setting the academic standard *par excellence*, for his advice in sharpening the direction of the proposal, and for his detailed comments that both provoked reflection and bolstered the argument in this dissertation. So much more can be mentioned about his supervision, but this one statement suffices: he made the whole learning and writing process a delightful academic journey!

My appreciation goes to Larina Lin Wang and Rachel Lott for their editorial expertise. To my oral defense examining committee, Dr. Ephraim Radner, Dr. David Neelands, Dr. Joseph Mangina, Dr. Ann Jervis, Dr. Paul Molnar, and Dr. Glen Taylor, I express appreciation for the pertinent questions and most encouraging remarks. They have helped me refine and reinforce the focus and the reasoning of my dissertation—an immensely enriching experience in itself.
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### Abbreviations

#### Old Testament

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Old Testament</th>
<th>Hebrew Book Name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gen. —Genesis</td>
<td>Ezr. —Ezra</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exod. —Exodus</td>
<td>Neh. —Nehemiah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lev. —Leviticus</td>
<td>Est. —Esther</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Num. —Numbers</td>
<td>Job —Job</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deut. —Deuteronomy</td>
<td>Ps. —Psalms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jos. —Joshua</td>
<td>Prov. —Proverbs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jdg. —Judges</td>
<td>Eccl. —Ecclesiastes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruth —Ruth</td>
<td>Cant. —Song of Solomon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Sam. —1 Samuel</td>
<td>Isa. —Isaiah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Sam. —2 Samuel</td>
<td>Jer. —Jeremiah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Ki. —1 Kings</td>
<td>Lam. —Lamentations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2Ki. —2 Kings</td>
<td>Ezek. —Ezekiel</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 Chr. —1 Chronicles</td>
<td>Dan. —Daniel</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 Chr. —2 Chronicles</td>
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#### New Testament

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>New Testament</th>
<th>Greek Book Name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Matt. —Matthew</td>
<td>Phil. —Philippians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mk. —Mark</td>
<td>Col. —Colossians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lk. —Luke</td>
<td>1 Thess. —1 Thessalonians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jn. —John</td>
<td>2 Thess. —2 Thessalonians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acts —Acts of the Apostles</td>
<td>1 Tim. —1 Timothy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rom. —Romans</td>
<td>2 Tim. —2 Timothy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Cor. —1 Corinthians</td>
<td>Tit. —Titus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Cor. —2 Corinthians</td>
<td>Phlm. —Philemon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gal. —Galatians</td>
<td>Heb. —Hebrews</td>
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<tr>
<td>Eph. —Ephesians</td>
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All Scriptures quoted are from the New International Version unless otherwise noted.

- **KJV**: King James Version
- **NKJV**: New King James Version
- **NLT**: New Living Translation
- **RSV**: Revised Standard Version

### Dead Sea Scrolls

*Initial Arabic numeral indicates cave number; Q=Qumran*

- **1 QH**: *Thanksgiving Hymns*
- **1 QS**: *Manual of Discipline (Rule of the Community)*
Jewish Literature, Rabbinical Writings

Ant. Jewish Antiquities, Flavius Josephus
B. Qam. Baba Qamma (The First Gate)
LXX Septuagint
m. Mishnah
Ned. Nedarim (Vows)
Tohar. Toharot or Tohoroth (Cleannesses)
Wars Wars of the Jews, Flavius Josephus

Reference Works

CD Church Dogmatics, Karl Barth
DCH The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew
DDC On Christian Doctrine / Teaching (De doctrina christiana), Augustine of Hippo
DDP On the Gift of Perseverance (De dono perseverantiae), Augustine of Hippo
EDBT Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology
HD Heidelberg Disputation, Martin Luther
Inst. Institutes of the Christian Religion, John Calvin
ISBE The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia
LW Luther’s Work, Martin Luther
NICNT New International Commentary on the New Testament
NICOT New International Commentary on the Old Testament
NIDBA The New International Dictionary of Biblical Archaeology
NIDOTTE The New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis
NIDNTT The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology
ST Summa Theologica, Thomas Aquinas
TDNT Theological Dictionary of the New Testament
TDOT Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament
TLNT Theological Lexicon of the New Testament
TLOT Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament
TWOT Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament
WA Weimarer Ausgabe, Martin Luther
PART I: THEOLOGICAL CONTEXT AND EXEGETICAL HISTORY

INTRODUCTION:
A THEOLOGICAL CONTEXT

Romans 9-11 is considered one of the most challenging texts in all of the Pauline epistles for at least three reasons. First, there is the complexity of its subject matter, such as election and predestination, individual fate or covenantal responsibility, mercy and hardening, defection and ‘all’ of Israel. Every single one of these topics has been an exegetical and theological battleground. Second, since the time of the early Church Fathers, this very section in the book of Romans has aroused scholarly concerns and academic debates. These nearly two millennia of scholarly discussions ought to caution us against being too dogmatic in drawing our conclusions. Third, one of the realities we must beware of is that “there is no such thing as presuppositionless exegesis.”¹

Due to the overwhelming length and content of this Pauline corpus, I will concentrate my theological dissertation within the parameters of Romans 9:6-29. My intent is to gain a deeper understanding of the doctrine of predestination and the theology of election and to reexamine its concept through the theology of the cross. It was Luther who advocated that the centrality of the cross be considered the prism in all our theological reflections and the lens through which dogmatics be examined. Such a suggestion to practice theology from the perspective of the cross of Christ solemnly mandates the setting aside of all our previous concepts of God’s dealing with the world. Therefore, the purpose of this research is to read Romans 9 and its related doctrinal issues through the perception of the cross,² to advance

¹ Steven Boguslawski, “Thomas Aquinas,” in Reading Romans Through the Centuries: From the Early Church to Karl Barth, ed. Jeffrey P. Greenman and Thomas Larsen (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2005), 81.
² The endeavor of this study as far as I know has never been accomplished before.
beyond the personal salvation domain and to reach a richer understanding of Paul’s view of election. In the course of exegesis, the key question that will be explored and examined is: “What does the apostle Paul mean by the phrase in Romans 9:11, ‘God’s purpose of election’?”

**Theological Context and History**

The doctrine of predestination has been a theology in flux since the early patristic period. What might be considered as “orthodox” in certain sectors or theological periods of Christendom would be regarded as “unorthodox” or even “heretical” in another, and vice versa. Before the Pelagian controversy, the distinction between the intention and execution of God’s will was taken into account concerning human affairs only, without much attention to the problem of predestination. The focus of the debate in the ante-Nicene period was mainly on the issue of freewill and responsibility. With the rise of the Pelagian heresy, there

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3 Pelagius, a native of Roman Britain, was concerned about the moral laxity of the believers in Rome and hence blamed such permissiveness on the doctrine of grace taught by the Church. In his exhortation for Christians to transcend moral mediocrity in an era of indifference and hold themselves to an exemplary moral standard, Pelagius began to instruct the believers to fortify their wills against temptation and commit to a life of virtue and good deeds. See James Wetzel, “Predestination, Pelagianism, and Foreknowledge,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 51; James Wetzel, “Snares of Truth: Augustine on Free Will and predestination,” in *Augustine and the Critics*, ed. Robert Dorado and George Lawless (London: Routledge, 2000), 127-28. In his analysis of human responsibility affecting Christian behavior, Pelagius further argued against the doctrine of original sin, so that the believers could not give that excuse for their sinful plight. Pelagius reckoned that there was a first sin, and that it had ominous consequences. Nevertheless his reading of Rom 5:12 differs from that of Augustine. Pelagius limited the inheritance of sin to physical death; spiritual death, accordingly, is not heritable (ibid., 126). In sum, Pelagius’ teaching ushered in the Pelagian heresy, which taught that the nature of man was intrinsically good and that man could achieve salvation through his will and merits.


5 Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: A History of the development of Doctrine*, vol. 1 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 197), 280-83. Pelikan cites in these pages the following early Church Fathers who insisted that God sets before man good and evil, life and death, and endows man with a will and discipline capable of obedience and resistance. Justin Martyr, for instance, believed that “the only unavoidable fate was the rule that reward was based on the actions of man’s free will, whether good or evil” (ibid., 282). Tertullian denounced astrology, which assumed that the actions of human beings were fated by the immutable arbitration of the stars (ibid.). Origen “oppos[ed] himself to those who denied the freedom of the will,” and “defined the purpose of prayer in such a way as to ensure both human freedom and divine providence; for divine knowledge was not the cause of man’s actions, which he performed in freedom and for which he was accountable” (ibid.). Meanwhile, Pelikan describes Augustine’s presentation of the case against paganism in the City of God as one
was a demand for a deeper and more meticulous understanding of the doctrine of predestination both in its intention and execution.

The prominent defender against the Pelagian heresy was Augustine. He was also the first among the Church Fathers to write systematically on the doctrine of predestination, beginning with his early writings *To Simplician*, and subsequently his *Four Anti-Pelagian Writings*, namely, *On Nature and Grace, On the Proceedings of Pelagius, On the Predestination of the Saints* and *On the Gift of Perseverance* (*De dono perseverantiae* or *DDP*).6 Other writings include the *City of God* and *Faith, Hope and Charity* (*Enchiridion*).

In his treatises against the Pelagians, Augustine was engaged in the difficult task of understanding, from the stance of the omniscience of God, the harmony between free will and the necessity of grace, as well as the relationship between foreknowledge and predestination. Since then, the subject matter has provoked passionate controversies for nearly two millennia. Matters such as irresistible grace and predilection, freedom of will and eternal decree, faith, merit, and the foreknowledge of God, preterition7 and the atonement of Christ have further complicated and intensified the debates and understanding of the doctrine of the election of God. Moreover, modern scholars8 have shifted their emphasis more

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6 Particularly in *DDP*, Augustine refuted Pelagian’s errors in three points: “The first of these is that the grace of God is not given according to our merits, for even all the merits of the just are the gift of God and conferred by His grace. The second is that no one, no matter how just he may be, lives in this corruptible body without some kind of sin. The third is that a man is born answerable for the sin of the first man and held by the bond of condemnation, unless the guilt contracted through generation is absolved through regeneration.” See Augustine, *DDP* 2.4, in *Four Anti-Pelagian Writings*, trans. John A. Mourant and William J. Collinge in The Fathers of the Church, ed. Thomas P. Halton (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1992).

7 Preterition refers to the action of passing over individuals in regard to divine grace and election.

8 Cf. pages 9 and ff.
towards contextual considerations—particularly the covenantal aspect of election and the thematic emphasis of Romans 9—and the Christocentrism of election in the study of the biblical doctrine of election and reprobation.

The Augustinian Predestination and its Corollary

In one of his last works, DDP, Augustine defined his doctrine of predestination thus:

“This and nothing else is the predestination of the saints, namely, the foreknowledge and preparation of God’s favors, by which those who are delivered are most certainly delivered.”

In defining predestination, he explicitly claimed two points: First, it is the predestination of individual salvation. Second, the actual predestining of individuals is decided in God’s grace and His immutable decree, which transcends all finite preconditions such as faith and merit. However, Augustine’s definition posed a darker corollary, as maintained in his own DDP:

“And where are the others, if not left by the divine judgment in the mass of perdition?”

Such an account of the “double” judgment of God became the precursor to “double predestination,” which implied the idea that God not only elects some for salvation but elects the rest for perdition. Previously to DDP, in *Enchiridion*, Augustine had referred specifically to “those whom He has justly predestined to punishment” and to “the salvation of those whom He has mercifully predestined to grace.”

Further to this corollary, Augustine wrote in *On Admonition and Grace* that the number of the saints is determined and closed by God’s predestination, so that no one will be saved unless one’s salvation has been predestined.

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9 DDP 14.35.
Augustine’s position on predestination inevitably encountered hurdles and obstacles in the early church. For example, the Council of Arles in the late fifth century rejected the position “that some have been condemned to death, others have been predestined to life.”\textsuperscript{13} The Second Council of Orange in 529 affirmed Augustine’s insight regarding the absolute priority of God’s grace while denying that “some have been truly predestined to evil by divine power.”\textsuperscript{14} Even though the Eastern Church Fathers\textsuperscript{15} stressed the absolute necessity of divine grace for salvation, they held to the position of the \textit{necessity of free will}.\textsuperscript{16} They chose to understand that “universal” predestination is based on the goodness of God; as such they disagreed with the doctrine of reprobation championed by Augustine.\textsuperscript{17}

\textbf{The Debate in the Western Church During the Middle Ages}

With Augustine’s doctrine of predestination, the tension that he bequeathed to Western theology persisted throughout the succeeding eleven centuries from the early through the high to late Middle Ages.\textsuperscript{18} Beside the debate between Faustus of Riez from

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{14} Denzinger, “Second Council of Orange II, canon 25,” in \textit{Catholic Dogma}, 81; Levering, ibid.
  \item \textsuperscript{15} There are limited writings that are preserved from the Eastern Church Fathers as compared to the wealth of materials that the church has inherited from the Western Church Fathers. Among the Eastern church’s writings, those of St. John of Damascus are often treated as representative because he appears to have been more successful as a profound theologian and thinker, as compared with other Greek Church Fathers.
  \item \textsuperscript{16} Constantine N. Tsirplanlis, \textit{Greek Patristic Theology: Basic Doctrines in Eastern Church Fathers} (NY: EO Press, 1979), 67-68.
  \item \textsuperscript{17} Ibid. Though Augustine did not reject the fundamental goodness of God behind all things, yet his earlier teaching of predestination (particularly reprobation) was based on God’s foreknowledge (Augustine, \textit{The Problem of Free Choice}, trans. Mark Pontifex [New York: Newman Press, 1955], 3.3.7). However, he later (so called his matured stage) taught that God’s double predestination is based on His inscrutable will alone. See Augustine, \textit{On the Gift of Perseverance}, in \textit{Four Anti-Pelagian Writings}, 14.35; cf. Mathijs Lamberigts, “Predestination,” in \textit{Augustine through the Ages} ed. Allan D. Fitzgerald, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 678). On the other hand, St. John of Damascus’ doctrine of predestination, which is based on God’s goodness, is reflected in most of the Catholic theological conceptions of predestination, even in Aquinas’ principle of predilection. Cf. Tsirplanlis, \textit{Greek Patristic Theology}, 75-76; 78.
  \item \textsuperscript{18} The early Middle Ages begins in the fifth century, while the late Middle Ages ends around the fifteenth century.
\end{itemize}
Southern Gaul and the Scythian monk Fulgentius in the fifth century, we find evidence of continued preoccupation with the problem in church synods. The Synod of Mainz (848) and the two Synods of Quierzy (849 and 853) condemned Gottschalk of Orbais (c. 804-869), a Benedictine monk who reinvigorated Augustine’s teachings and brought them to the forefront of theological debate once again as a consequence of his controversial teaching on double predestination. For that reason, all three Synods condemned and anathematized Gottschalk as a heretic. However, his controversial teaching on predestination has been seen as a harbinger of Calvin’s doctrine of double predestination. The theological thoughts and flourishing commentaries of the late Middle Ages, particularly on the book of Romans, provided the theological stage leading up to the Reformation.

19 Around 475, Faustus of Riez from Southern Gaul wrote his treatise On Grace, a disputation on justification for a dual understanding of election and predestination as a product of both divine grace and human responsibility. It drew a strong reaction from Fulgentius and his Scythian monks. This fueled Fulgentius’ correspondence on Christology and Grace and The Truth about Predestination and Grace, in which he basically defended the Augustinian position on grace and predestination. See Rob Roy McGregor and Donald Fairbairn, “Introduction,” in Correspondence on Christology and Grace (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2013), 13-14. Fulgentius firmly believed that the denial of predestination denies God’s immutability and eternal foreknowledge. Without this foreknowledge of all future events, both good and bad, He will not be able to show forth His mercy and judgment, and arrange all the works of His grace and justice according to His eternal ordering and unchangeable decree (Fulgentius, “The Truth about Predestination and Grace,” in Correspondence on Christology and Grace, Book III.I.1). If God is devoid of the fullness of knowledge of all future events, He Himself will always be mutable (ibid., III.IX.13).

20 Convoked by Hincmar of Reims.

21 Peter J. Thuesen, Predestination: The American Career of a Contentious Doctrine (NY: Oxford University Press, 2009), 23; Frank A. James, Peter Martyr Vermigli and Predestination: The Augustinian Inheritance of an Italian Reformer (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 6 (note 15). Gottschalk’s most important work in this dispute is entitled On Predestination (De praedestinatione). The most characteristic teaching of this work is his central notion of double predestination, in so far as God does not will that all be saved. See his “Reply to Rabanus Maurus,” 7, in Victor Genke and Francis X. Gumerlock, Gottschalk and a Medieval Predestination Controversy, (Marquette University Press, 2010), 67. This double or twofold predestination prescribed clearly that God predestined both the elect to eternal life and the reprobate to eternal death (ibid., 66, 71, 73). The elect cannot be lost to God and become reprobate (ibid., 59); and it is only the elect that Christ redeemed (On Predestination, 11; cf. Genke, Gottschalk, 148). On the other hand, Gottschalk’s notion of reprobation dwells on the consequence of wickedness, i.e., the wicked were predestined to the evil of torment and punishment, not predestined to the evil of sin and wickedness (On Predestination, 1.9; cf. Genke, Gottschalk, 114). They were thus predestined because God foreknew those who were going to be deserters and apostates (“Longer Confession,” 3, cf. Genke, Gottschalk, 75). The reason that Gottschalk held to his teaching on double predestination is found in his undergirding principle of God’s immutability (Gottschalk, Another Treatise on Predestination, 1; cf. Genke, Gottschalk, 161).

Calvin and His Doctrine of Double Predestination

During the period of Reformation, the major writings of Augustine and of Bucer greatly influenced Calvin in his preoccupation with the doctrine of predestination. Thus, Calvin held the view that God has eternally decreed the ultimate destiny of each individual, whether eternal life (election) or eternal damnation (reprobation). Calvin explained his definition of predestination as follows:

We call predestination God’s eternal decree, by which he decided with himself what he willed to become of each man. For not all are created in equal condition; rather, eternal life is foreordained for some, eternal damnation for others. Therefore, as any man has been created to one or the other of these ends, we speak of him as predestined to life or to death. Calvin confidently concludes that God actively decrees reprobation just as he wills election. However, not all of the major Reformers agreed with Calvin’s doctrine of double predestination, most notably Bullinger and the later Melanchthon. In fact, Bullinger cautioned Calvin not to be overly speculative and warned him against debating particularly...

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24 Francois Wendel, Calvin, trans. Philip Mairet (London: Collins, 1974), 264. Sinnema also notes: “The topic of predestination shaped the whole of Bucer’s theology . . . ‘Some were elected by God to life before he created this world; others, because they were not elected to life, were assigned, also before anything was made, to that for which the Lord at least uses them, namely, that he might bring forth an example of his wrath in them and in that way sanctify his name in them.’ The ultimate purpose of this is not their perdition, but God’s glory . . . Via Calvin, the emphasis on God’s glory would become a prominent aspect of Reformed discussions of reprobation.” See Donald W. Sinnema, The Issue of Reprobation at the Synod of Dort (1618-19) in Light of the History of this Doctrine (Ann Arbor, MI: U.M.I., 1985), 116 n.39.
26 Ibid., III.23.1. Here Calvin departs from the more classically Augustinian way of describing reprobation—God simply passes over some people, leaving them in the mass of condemned humanity. For Calvin, logical consistency demanded a double decree of election and reprobation (Thuesen, Predestination, 30).
27 James, Vermigli and Predestination, 30; Philip C. Holtrop, The Bolsec Controversy on Predestination, from 1551 to 1555: the Statements of Jerome Bolsec, and the Responses of John Calvin, Theodore Beza, and other Reformed Theologians (Lewiston, NY: E. Mellen, 1993), 808-11. Even though Luther makes justification the linchpin of his theology and advocates for the Augustinian doctrine of predestination, he always cautions against speculation about predestination, warning that such speculation is the devil’s way of making the passion of Christ and the sacraments of no effect (Thuesen, Predestination, 28).
28 Holtrop, Bolsec Controversy, 88-89.
on the secret will of God.\(^{29}\) Calvin encountered similar opinions from other Basel theologians advising him to be theologically moderate while discussing predestination.\(^{30}\) Likewise, Melanchthon only asserted an eternal decree to save and a universal promise of grace. He refused to derive election and reprobation from the nature of God as he deliberated on the various “universal” texts of Scripture, such as Matthew 11:28, John 3:16, 6:40, Romans 3:22, 10:12, and 1 Timothy 2:4. At this point, Melanchthon quoted Chrysostom: “God draws, but he draws those who are willing.”\(^{31}\)

The controversy between Bolsec and Calvin also arose in Geneva over the doctrine of double predestination. Jerome Bolsec, who was a Carmelite monk and a French physician, became a critic of Calvin’s doctrine of predestination, specifically on the issue of double predestination.\(^{32}\) The confrontation reached a new height on October 16, 1551 when the city magistrates arrested Bolsec for his sharp public criticism of Calvin’s doctrine. As a result, Bolsec was put on trial and charged with attacking the religious establishment of Geneva and for bringing scurrilous charges against its teaching.\(^{33}\) Consequently, Bolsec was driven out permanently from Geneva on December 23, 1551.

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\(^{29}\) Ibid., 811.
\(^{30}\) Ibid., 61: “Bullinger desired to teach predestination with modesty, piety, and a sensitivity for biblical correctness. In the process, he felt obliged to chide Calvin for being too speculative.” See also ibid., 88-89.
\(^{31}\) Ibid., 808-09.
\(^{32}\) The main themes in Bolsec’s disputation can be divided into five topics: a) biblical simplicity, b) eternity and history, c) the “universality” and “equality” of grace, d) election in Christ, and e) God’s initiative and man’s freedom (Holtrop, Bolsec Controversy, 56). Bolsec concludes: “Note well that Scripture does not state that we are saved because God elected us but because we believed in Jesus Christ” (ibid., 64). During the height of these controversies in the 1550s, Calvin also penned his treatise defending predestination *A Treatise on the Eternal Predestination of God.*

\(^{33}\) To further demonstrate the correctness of the Genevan doctrine of predestination and to foster the unity of Swiss churches, the court in Geneva sent a letter to secure advice from Bern, Basel, and Zurich. The responses turned out to be unsatisfactory to Calvin: support for Calvin’s teaching of predestination was restrained at best, and a number of leading ministers, such as Bullinger and Melanchthon, even concurred with some of the key concepts of Bolsec’s treatise on predestination. In Calvin’s refutation of Bolsec, he quoted many passages from Augustine’s writings, implying that his teaching was based on the orthodox teaching as he invoked on the authority of Augustine. However, Bolsec disagreed with such an approach by Calvin, arguing that the doctrine of predestination—as taught by Calvin and the Genevan ministers—was not the same as in Augustine (ibid., 55).
Calvin’s teachings on double predestination provoked heated controversies culminating at the Synod of Dort (1618-19). At issue in the Synod was specifically the scriptural passage in Romans 8:28-11:36, which presented the problem of predestination and posed difficulties for explaining the relationship between determinism and the freewill of man. What was once considered Gottschalk’s “heresy” in the ninth century became Reformed “orthodoxy” in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Nonetheless, the doctrine of predestination continued to be a theology in flux after the Synod because strict Calvinism did not gain wide acceptance in the whole of the Reformed Church. Calvin’s teaching on double predestination and his publicized doctrine of reprobation remain the subject of a protracted theological debate.

Post-Reformed and Modern Scholarship

Aroused by a sense of discontentment with the traditional exegesis of their proof texts on election and predestination, paralleled by the development of the hermeneutical theories of the last two centuries, Post-Reformed theologians and modern scholarship have embarked

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34 The Synod of Dort was the National Synod held in Dordrecht in 1618–1619 by the Dutch Reformed Church, to settle a divisive controversy initiated by the rise of Arminianism.
35 Arminius candidly admits the difficulty in understanding Romans 9: “I freely confess that that part always seemed to me enveloped in the densest shade, and most difficult of explanation, until the light shed upon it in a way dispersed the darkness...” in James Arminius, The Works of James Arminius, vol. 3, trans. James Nichols and William Nichols (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1986), 485. Actually, Arminius stands firmly in the tradition of Reformed theology in insisting that salvation is by grace alone and that human merit must be excluded as a contribution to salvation. See Carl Bangs, Arminius: A Study in the Dutch Reformation (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1971), 198. Nevertheless, he differs from Calvin on at least two key points: 1) the election of Jesus Christ as the foundation of God’s decree, and 2) the election of individuals. Regarding the first, Arminius writes that “the first precise and absolute decree of God for effecting the salvation of sinful man is that he has determined to appoint his Son, Jesus Christ, as a Mediator, Redeemer, Savior, Priest, and King, to nullify sin by his death, to obtain the lost salvation through his obedience, and to communicate it by his power” (Writings, I, 247-48; cf. Bangs, Arminius, 350). Furthermore, all election is “in Christ” [Writings, II, 100]. It is noteworthy that Karl Barth is being hailed for emphasizing this point in his Church Dogmatics (Bangs, Arminius, 350-51). Regarding the election of individuals, Arminius does not begin with the decree to save or condemn particular individuals, but subordinates the issue to the Christological basis of election. Furthermore, the decree to save certain individuals and to damn others rests upon the foreknowledge of God (Bangs, Arminius, 352).
on the venture of rethinking the Reformed reading of Romans 9. Such writers as John Locke, John Wesley, John Colenso, Albert Schweitzer, Karl Barth and others have proposed to reorient the interpretations and theological understandings of Paul’s view of divine election and predestination. Many modern scholars modify earlier approaches by interpreting election from a clear Christocentrism perspective. Notable among such scholars is Karl Barth with respect to his doctrine of election, where Christ is both the Subject and the Object of God’s election — both the electing God and the elect Man.

In the same manner, much modern research and scholarship have emphasized the obligation to further engage the hermeneutics of context—mostly the covenantal aspect of

37 These writers’ contribution will be discussed at greater length in chapter 2.
38 Although Locke was brought up in a Calvinistic environment, he categorically rejected the doctrine of absolute predestination. In his interpretation of Romans 9, which was used to support the Calvinistic doctrine, he argues that Paul was not speaking of the eternal destiny of individuals but only of God’s election first of Jews and then of Gentiles to be His people. Although he was opposed to the Calvinistic teaching, there was no doubt in Locke’s mind about the reality of God’s grace and faith as a gift of God; to attain it “Men do or can do nothing, Grace hitherto does all.” See John Locke, A Paraphrase and Notes on the Epistles of St. Paul, ed. Arthur W. Wainwright (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1987) Eph. II.8, 629. Alongside this emphasis on the divine initiative is Locke’s insistence on the freedom of human beings to accept or resist God’s grace. Those who have been called are not inevitably justified, but only if they obey the truth (ibid., Rom. VIII.30, 559; see also Wainwright, “Introduction,” in Locke, Paraphrase, 13, 15, 56-57).
40 Colenso wrote his commentary on Romans based on his many years of missionary experience and careful study of this epistle. His reading of Romans interpreted the purpose of divine predestination as directing the elect towards conforming to the image of God’s Son, not speaking at all of eternal salvation and perdition. See J. W. Colenso, St. Paul’s Epistle to the Romans: Newly Translated, and Explained from a Missionary Point of View, (NY: D. Appleton and Company, 1863), 189, 195.
41 Schweitzer in his books The Mysticism of Paul The Apostle and Paul and His Interpreters has contributed to Pauline studies outside of the Reformation interpretation by looking at Paul’s contemporary Judaism and its influence on his writing of Romans.
42 According to Barth, predestination should not be understood as an abstract, eternal decree of God. Election must begin with Jesus Christ as the One who elects and the One who is elected. Hence, from all eternity and before the foundation of the world, God has elected us and predestined us in Jesus Christ (essentially, Barth has restated what Arminius stated all along). Furthermore, Barth defines election as “the eternal beginning of all of God’s ways and works in Jesus Christ.” See Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics (CD), study edition, ed. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance (London: T. & T. Clark, 2009) II/2:94. In this way, predestination is no longer a dark decree of God that instills fear, but rather the good news in Jesus Christ.
43 CD II/2:3. This fundamental principle has brought about a revolutionary understanding of Reformed doctrines of election and predestination, where the election of Christ is differentiated from Calvin’s doctrine of double predestination with a universal election in Christ. Barth saw Christology as the basis of the biblical doctrine of election. Barth thus argued: “Theology must begin with Jesus Christ... Theology must also end with Him” (CD II/2:4).
election and the thematic emphasis of Romans 9—and the historical analysis of Paul’s writings, predominantly Romans 9-11. In particular, the history of the interpretation of Romans 9 demonstrates how diversely one can construe the meanings and implications of this text according to one’s doctrinal stand or theological persuasion. Within the exegetical and theological realm, the major contributions of modern scholarship to the understanding of Romans 9 in reference to the theology of election and doctrine of predestination are recognizable in three areas: the Christocentric emphasis in the theology of election, the covenantal aspect of Paul’s discourse in Romans 9, and the compassion and mercy of God as a universal, creatively formative factor. What recent scholarship has contributed to the study of predestination is the obligation to thoroughly examine its scriptural sources, specifically considering the textual and contextual analysis, the thematic highlights and distinctiveness, and the covenantal aspect and Christocentric emphasis of Romans 9. Instead of allowing a particular theological culture to dictate the meaning of the passage, the recent scholarly reorientations provide further exegetical precision to this passage and address the questions involved while allowing the text to convey more completely what Paul had in mind, especially in relation to his concepts of election and reprobation.

Thesis Statement and Argument

Notably, all of the major disputation on the doctrine of predestination in every ecclesiastical and historical era have employed different verses from Romans 9 as proof texts to defend their theological positions. Thus over the centuries, Romans 9 stands as the *locus classicus* for the debate surrounding free will and God’s immutable decree, corporate and individual election, the mercy and the patience of God, God’s hardening of hearts and his formation of to what Paul calls “vessels of wrath”, encompassing deliberations on the priority of the Israelites and the covenant of God, the debate between inclusivism and universalism, and so forth.

Given the renewed interest in Romans 9-11 in recent decades and the reorientation of the Reformed theology of election and its doctrine of predestination, I will deal with three fundamental questions and related proposals, which stem from the aforementioned passage. First, what can a reading of the Pauline letters and an understanding of Paul’s Jewish background and his own theological convictions tell us about the proper approach to the doctrines of predestination and election within the context of Romans 9? It is no less obligatory to examine the Old Testament writings, the book of Deuteronomy in particular, which is suffused with the idea of election and can thus help to explicate the Jewish conception of these doctrines. Second, in concurrence with Luther who proposed that *theologia crucis*, the theology of the cross, be the lens through which all other doctrines be examined, what reassessment does the traditional doctrine of predestination call for in light

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45 The starting point of predestination for the Reformers was the immutability and the sovereignty of God, whereas for the Catholic theologians, represented by Aquinas, the focal point was the love of God and His Providence. See Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica (ST)*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (Notre Dame, IN: Christian Classics from Ave Maria Press, Inc., 1948) 1, 20; 2; 3; 4; & 23, 8. In addition, the Catholic theologians primarily emphasized that predestination is the understanding of the One who predestines, and the focus of predestination is not on individual destiny.
of the crucifixion of Christ? Third, what does the apostle Paul mean by the phrase in Romans 9:11 “God’s purpose (πρόθεσις) of election”? As aforementioned, a grasp of Paul’s perspective on the purpose of election necessitates a renewed existential focus on *theologia crucis*.

Accordingly, I have chosen to take the position that, through the theological lens of the cross, we are enabled to rethink the doctrine of predestination, particularly in the context of Romans 9. Hence, the aim of this thesis is to establish that the cross is the highlight and supreme expression of God’s purpose of election. The primary principle which Paul underscores within the context of Romans 9 is that *the way of the cross is the manifesto of God’s purpose of election*.

**Approach to the Research**

In view of the varied historical contexts and theological flux of the doctrine of predestination, and with respect for the complexity of these topics, one needs to exercise due prudence and to withstand the temptation of an all too simplified solution\(^46\) or of becoming too dogmatic in drawing one’s conclusions. For this thesis, I propose to conduct my research within two methodological parameters. First, I will approach Romans 9 exegetically, by examining the literary, contextual, historical, and syntactical aspects of the text. Second, and as a corollary to the first, I will apply the lens of the cross of Christ as a theological parameter within which to reflect on Paul’s view of election in Romans 9.

Exegetically, it was Kierkegaard who aptly suggested that, in the reading of the scriptural text, one not only needs to pay attention to the immediacy of the passage but also be keenly aware of the Spirit and the intimation of “the secret of the metaphorical words.” In

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other words, one should not merely dwell on the direct communication of the text but need to have one’s understanding “carried over” by the awakening of the Spirit to the other side of the metaphorical precepts. Stendahl also enlightens readers concerning the language of Romans 9: “Paul sees purpose where we see outcome. The language is actually not Pauline. It is Septuagintal, it is Hebrew, and it offers a wonderful way of seeing the world. What we see as cause and effect, the Greek and the Hebrew see as push (thrust) [explanation added] and purpose.” Often, in claiming the “plain sense” or focusing on the “hidden decree” and “inscrutable ways” spoken of in Romans 9, interpreters overlook the “metaphorical precepts” and the Jewish background of the theology of the apostle Paul. The recognition of these “metaphorical precepts” at work will direct our reading of Romans 9 toward the “thrust and purpose” of Paul in the chapter, rather than allow us to dwell on a linear logic of “cause and effect” as seen in the traditional Reformed “double-predestination” reading of this passage. In light of such reminders, a change in our perspective on the contextual and literary frames of Romans 9 may make possible a more accurate and objective solution to the problem of predestination.

Within the exegetical parameters, due to the length and content of this Pauline text, I will restrict my discussion to Romans 9:6-29. Notably, the significance of the doctrine of election cited in Romans 9 rests predominantly on the exegesis of verses 10-13 and the theological insights of verses 14-29, with their correlated texts in both the Old and New Testaments. Because these texts refer specifically to the case of Jacob and Esau, the Genesis

50 *Inst.*, III.22.4; 23.1 & 5.
51 In order to avoid eisegesis, the reading must be aligned with the literal structure, contextual-historical background and the repeated thematic catchwords in this passage.
account of Jacob and Esau’s birth will become a crucial factor in understanding the mystery and purpose of God’s election, which is centered in the cross of Christ. The historical context and theological extension\(^{52}\) of the pairing of Jacob and Esau with the historical encounter of Jesus and Herod are significant for shedding light on Paul’s intention in Romans 9-11. Hence, upon analysis of Jacob and Esau in the Old Testament, I will show how theologia crucis\(^{53}\) becomes the motivating thrust in grasping the essential concept of election in Romans 9, compelling one to advance beyond the personal salvation domain. The ultimate aim is to reach a better and fuller understanding of the purpose of God’s election of grace in the doctrine of predestination.

Second, the theological parameter for this study derives from Luther’s claim that the centrality of the cross should be considered the prism in all our theological reflections and the lens through which theological reflections are examined. Luther further asserted that theological vocabulary must be modified in the context of the cross of Jesus Christ. In line with this Pauline focus of Luther, the basic tenets of the traditional doctrine of predestination should be reevaluated and scrutinized in light of the cross of Christ. If the cross of Jesus Christ is indeed reckoned as the measure of our theology, then the love and mercy of God,\(^{54}\) rather than the decretum absolutum, should be the focal and starting point in the development of a clearer understanding and even reorientation of the doctrine of election. The crucis reading will also substantiate “frontier reading”\(^{55}\) and reconfigure the reading of the texts in Romans 9 and other

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\(^{52}\) By “theological extension” I mean the drawing out of implications from one historical/theological fact and their application to another central one, such as the allegorical pairing of Sarah and Hagar in Galatians 4. This notion of historical and theological extension parallels Kierkegaard’s “metaphorical precepts” and Stendahl’s “push and purpose” reading of Scripture.

\(^{53}\) This claim sets the basis for the second methodological parameter.

\(^{54}\) Jn. 3:16; Rom. 9-11; Eph. 2:4.

places regarding predestination. On the ground of theologia crucis, the predisposition of holding the traditional doctrine of double predestination, wherein a strict dichotomy dictates humanity either to eternal salvation or to damnation, can be cautiously avoided. Integrally, what does the apostle Paul mean by the phrase in Romans 9:11 “God’s purpose of election”? What then is the act and rationale of election intended in Romans 9:11-13? In seeking to better understand the doctrine of election and reinforce its concept through the theology of the cross, this thesis will submit a reading of the explicit statements involving election within Romans 9 by uncovering how the cross is the proper and central theological lens for understanding Paul’s view of election.  

In addition, the cross and both the economic and immanent Trinity are interconnected. Moltmann fittingly asserts, “The cross is at the center of the Trinity . . . No Trinity is conceivable without the Lamb, without the sacrifice of love, without the crucified Son.” Thus, a Trinitarian economic perspective can enrich and deepen the doctrine of election. In light of these two themes, I will establish that the theology of the cross and Trinitarian election are contained within the text and precepts of Romans 9. Therefore, I will pursue the study of Romans 9 concurrently with three major areas of emphasis: a) the Trinitarian perichoretic election in the suffering of the cross, b) the election pursuit of the  

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56 One particular interest of this thesis is centered on Calvin’s view of the doctrine of reprobation. I will re-examine predestination to condemnation, entrenched as it is within the theology of Calvin, together with his understanding of Romans 9. By engaging the writings of Calvin, this thesis will seek to further discuss the theological implications of the extent of Christ’s atonement, limited or unlimited, as it relates to a person’s understanding of the doctrine of election and reprobation. Moreover, the biblical terminologies for the words decree, predestination and reprobate will be further studied, which should lead to a clarified and broadened perspective on the subject matter in question. Furthermore, it is obligatory to explore, among the Old Testament writings, the books of Deuteronomy, Isaiah, Jeremiah and Hosea, which are suffused with the notion of election and from which we can explicate the Jewish conception of these doctrines.  

divine mercy (*eleos*) through the prism of the theology of the cross, and c) the purpose of election in the way of the cross.

**Outline of the Dissertation**

Part I sets the stage with an introduction to the origin of the theological problem of the doctrine of double predestination, while tracing the exegetical history of the book of Romans from the early patristic period up until modern scholarship. Chapters 1 and 2 examine the hermeneutical emphases and principles in reading Romans throughout the history of the church. These two chapters trace the hermeneutical approaches of each period and explore how their interpretations of this epistle have impacted the theology of each era. I begin with early patristic (both Greek and Latin) interpretations of the Bible and examine how these patristic readings of Romans established the formative interpretive principles for subsequent interpretations and uses of Romans. This section is followed by analyzing various medieval readings and then tracing the rise of Reformation-era theological expositions of Romans. The eloquent volumes of writings gathered from the patristic and medieval periods served as indispensable contributions in shaping key issues in the Reformers’ doctrine of predestination, particularly for Martin Bucer, Heinrich Bullinger, John Calvin, Martin Luther, Casper Olevian, Peter Martyr Vermigli, and even Desiderius Erasmus. From the Reformation era, I proceed to modern scriptural hermeneutical and critical methods; and Part I concludes with an examination of the analytical-theological-contextual choices that shape the current debates and dialectical understandings of Romans 9. In each era, from the ante-Nicene fathers to the reorientation of modern scholarship, I explicitly discuss the ways in which interpretations of predestination in Romans 9 have been influenced by contemporaneous exegetical approaches and hermeneutical emphases.
The history of the interpretation of Romans 9 demonstrates and reconfirms how any interpreter can construe the meanings and implications of the text based on personal doctrinal stances or theological persuasions. Nonetheless, with a consideration of the contributions of modern scholarship, Part II goes a step further in the reading of Romans 9 and argues that the cross is the proper and central theological lens for understanding Paul’s view of election. It also shows how, if that is true, a number of traditional approaches to election, especially in Reformed circles, need to be rethought. The ensuing chapters chart the course by demonstrating that the way of the cross is the manifesto of God’s purpose of election.

Chapter 3 identifies the unity in the diverse interpretations of Romans 9 through a Trinitarian economic perspective, elaborating particularly on the following: a) the witness of the Holy Spirit in the course of election, b) the mercy of God the Father in the community of the elect, and c) the cross of Christ the Son in the connection with Jacob and Esau. In this section, Christ as the central figure of the text, and the cross as the highlight of God’s purpose of election, will be extensively explicated.

Emerging from this reading of Romans 9 and related texts, Chapters 4, 5 and 6 then follow a progressive spiral movement in discussing how each person of the Godhead plays a critical role (beyond Romans 9) in Trinitarian election from the perspective of the theology of the cross. Chapter 4 dwells on the work of the Holy Spirit in His perichoretic relation with the Father and the Son in the divine election, particularly the Trinitarian perichoretic relations in the suffering of the cross. Converging at the cross, the Trinitarian sufferings show the necessity of complementing our understanding of election with the concrete intensity of the sacrificial love of God.

58 The spiral approach is the method of circling around related theological subjects in order to achieve a cumulative illumination. The necessity of circling back to the former topics is dictated by the broadening theological emphasis at each progressive level of the discussion.
Chapter 5 centers on the pursuit of the divine eleos (mercy) of the Father in the theology of the cross, with inferences from Romans 9 and its wider theological propositions. This section is not simply a theology that dwells on the suffering of Christ on the cross, but maintains that the theology of the cross is fixed on the triumph of the cross and the God who raised Jesus from death on the third day. Subsequently, the cross itself magnifies God’s attention to human sin and suffering and the determination of His eleos, which was not for the righteous, but for the reprobate. Chapter 6 focuses on Christ and converges on the purpose of election in the way of the cross, as it is extracted from the reading of Romans 9. Four facets of the purpose of election will be ascertained and methodically substantiated in this chapter. Conversely, the cultural sentimentality of a cross without biblical election and the misguided implications of election without the perspective of the cross will also be cautiously weighed out in the concluding Chapter 7, under the topic of “A Cross without Election versus Election without the Cross.” This final chapter shifts from Romans 9 to a broader set of theological implications from cruciform election to the church and society.

Implications of the Dissertation

Influenced by the Christocentric approach of Barth in his disputation on the theology of election, and by the economic Trinitarianism of Moltmann in stressing the perichoretic relations of Godhead in the suffering of the cross, I have undertaken to advance the proposed thesis as a more comprehensive examination of the doctrine of predestination and election in the reading of Romans 9 than has normally been given in the Western tradition. This exposition is executed from the perspective of Trinitarian election through the theology of the cross, which, as far as I know, has not been endeavored before. It is my earnest desire

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59 Such as the feminist interpretation of the cross or using the cross as a symbol for charm and protection.
that this thesis may produce a fresh orientation within and propose an appropriate direction for a biblical perspective on the theology of election. I also hope that my study can generate future theological discussions, which can help deepen and amend my own work.
CHAPTER 1
EXEGETICAL HISTORY (I): READING ROMANS 9
FROM THE ANTE-NICENE FATHERS TO THE MEDIEVAL ERA

The interpretations of Romans 9 have considerable implications for the controversies over the understanding of the doctrine of predestination and the theology of election. These interpretations over the last two thousand years\(^1\) have aroused many intense debates. An examination of the history of exegesis will caution us against drawing conclusions hastily or approaching the complexities of this chapter simply with a linear logic.\(^2\) The problem with Lambrecht’s view is that it remains on what Kierkegaard calls “the side of immediacy and direct communication,”\(^3\) rather than seeking first the “thrust and purpose”\(^4\) of Paul in Romans 9. However, prior to delving into the nuances of the readings and interpretations of Romans 9 in greater detail, we will first examine the hermeneutical emphases and principles in reading Romans throughout each period in the history of the church, from the ante-Nicene Fathers through the medieval era, the Reformed period, and the reorientation of modern scholarship. We will see how these hermeneutical emphases might have impacted the


\(^2\) A careful reading of the history of interpretation of Romans 9 will reveal that much of the debate seems to stem from Paul’s “leap of logic”—which, as I argue, is distinct from Lambrecht’s view of Paul’s argumentation as “a lack of logic.” According to Lambrecht, “It would seem, however, that honestly to admit in 9,1-13 Paul’s one-sidedness, as well as his mental leaps, is exegetically preferable to forcing upon him a stretched consistency. We call it a lack of logic. Whether Paul himself (and his original readers) would term it such is another matter.” See Jan Lambrecht, *Pauline Studies: collected essays* (Leuven, Belgium: Leuven University Press, 1994), 60.

\(^3\) Kierkegaard drew a distinction between the spiritual person and the sensate-physical person. The foundational difference between these two types of person is that the spiritual person, being awakened by the spirit, has an intimation of “the secret of the metaphorical words.” Yet, in spite of saying the same thing or reading the same words, the sensate-physical individual will not have the same intimation because this individual dwells in the immediate and visible world. Moreover, the spiritual person is known to have made the transition; awakened by the spirit, one’s understanding is “carried over” to the other side of the metaphorical precepts, while the sensate-physical person remains on the side of the immediacy and direct communication (Kierkegaard, *Works of Love*, 209).

\(^4\) Stendahl calls it “push and purpose” (Stendahl, *Romans*, 36).
theology of each interval. Due to the immensity of the Romans studies and writings available throughout the two centuries, the assessment of these analyses can only be representative, rather than comprehensive.

This chapter will begin with early patristic (both Greek and Latin) interpretations of the Epistle, and will reflect on how the Church Fathers understood election and predestination according to Romans 9. The study continues with the various medieval readings of Romans and how the medieval commentators interpreted the related issues in chapter 9. Chapter 3 will further examine the hermeneutical approaches of the sixteenth-century Reformation and of modern scholarship, and how their approaches have shaped and instigated their interpretive choices in Romans 9.

**Patristic Hermeneutics: Characteristics of the Patristic Interpretations of Romans**

The diverse patristic readings of Romans prove to be challenging. Early patristic readings and treatments are seldom comprehensive but rather selective, and they occur in treatises or citations based on different collections of sermonic topics. Nevertheless, these sermons, treatises, and commentaries are pivotal in shaping the interpretive principles for subsequent theological treatments and interpretations of the book of Romans. The readings of Romans by these Church Fathers are foundational discourses, showing the frequent patristic emphasis on the themes of Christology, the Holy Spirit, and Christian morality. Furthermore, these readings also reveal how these patristic minds wrestled with Christian

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5 The collection of the patristic writers comprises both the Greek (Eastern) and the Latin (Western) Fathers ranging from the second to the middle of the fifth century. Some of the more prominent Greek Fathers are Irenaeus, John Chrysostom, Theodoret of Cyrus, Origen and Cyril of Alexandria. Among the Latin Fathers are Tertullian, Jerome, Ambrose of Milan, Ambrosiaster and Augustine of Hippo. As indicated, our aim in this study is representative, not exhaustive.

theological issues such as fatalistic determinism and freedom of choice, foreknowledge and predestination, faith and repentance, merits versus divine grace. From the patristic period onward, the reading of Romans has become an immeasurable influence on the framing of Christian thought and an integral part of the formation of Christian theology.

In order to understand why the early Church Fathers read the book of Romans in certain ways and with definite emphases, one must realize the following: a) the early Church Fathers were prompted to address the pagan polytheistic context and the promiscuous lifestyle within Roman society, and b) these Church Fathers used the writings of Paul to try to refute the theological issues that they were confronted with, particularly the deterministic fatalism of early Gnosticism. These contexts contributed to the shaping of the patristic focus on and interpretation of Romans. The Church Fathers’ approaches and emphases are pivotal in shaping the foundational principles for subsequent interpretations and use of Romans.

Greek Patristics:

Origen’s Hermeneutical Practices and Reading of Romans

Origen of Alexandria is perhaps the greatest interpreter and best-known representative of the Alexandrian School in biblical interpretation. He was a textual scholar who exhibited a masterful knowledge of the Hebrew and Greek languages in the compilation of the first textual criticism of the Old Testament’s Greek translations, known as the Hexapla. Origen considered biblical exposition as a solemn task, primarily because of his

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8 Christopher A. Hall, Reading Scripture with the Church Fathers (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 141. In the late second century, a more prescribed scholarly approach to biblical interpretation was developed beginning with the School of Alexandria in Egypt. This school, formalized by Pantaenus, was known for its extensive application of an allegorical method of biblical exegesis.
9 The Hexapla was an edition of the Old Testament in six versions: (1) Hebrew, (2) Hebrew transliterated into Greek characters [Secunda is just the Latin word for the “second” part of the treatise], and (3-6) the four main versions of the Greek translation of the OT, known as the Aquila, Symmachus, Septuagint and Theodotion. See
high regard for the Bible as the only source of revelation, and because of his conviction that every word of Scripture comes from the Holy Spirit. For Origen, the true author of the entire Scripture was the Holy Spirit. This work of the Spirit extended to every single letter of the Bible.\textsuperscript{10} In the words of the Origen scholar Ronald Heine, “We will not understand the way Origen reads the Bible if we miss this basic point, that it is always the Holy Spirit who speaks in the text of the Bible.”\textsuperscript{11} Such a statement leads to an appreciation of Origen’s commitment to devote countless hours each day to prayer and the study of Scripture, based on his firm belief that one who exegetes the Scripture has to be a person of the Spirit. Only one who is living in and walking in the Spirit can hope to understand the deep truths that the Spirit has implanted within the scriptural text.\textsuperscript{12}

Origen’s \textit{Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans} is the oldest surviving commentary on Romans. In fact, it precedes Chrysostom’s Greek commentary on Romans by about 150 years. This commentary by Origen is reckoned to be his most mature

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\item For the Psalms two more translations were added. The central purpose of the \textit{Hexapla} was to ensure the accuracy of the Septuagint, which was the accepted version used in all the Greek churches. Cf. Henry Chadwick, \textit{The Early Church} (London: Penguin Books, 1993), 102.
\item George Lewis, \textit{The Philocalia of Origen: A Compilation of Selected Passages from Origen’s Works made by St. Gregory of Nazianzus and St. Basil of Caseara} (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1911), 32.
\item Ronald Heine, “Reading the Bible with Origen,” in the \textit{Bible in Greek Christian Antiquity}, ed. Paul M. Blower (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997), 132.
\item Ibid., 81, 86. Accordingly, Origen upheld the view that the primary principle of Scripture is to convey spiritual truths, and the duty of the interpreter is to go beyond or beneath the plain letter of Scripture to discover the deeper spiritual meaning placed there by the Holy Spirit. However, contrary to common notions, he never used allegory to the neglect of the literal sense. In Origen’s own words, “[T]he passages which are historically true are far more numerous than those which are composed with a purely spiritual meanings” (G. W. Butterworth, \textit{Origen on First Principles} (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1973), 4.3.4, 295). As a result, Origen felt that it was his responsibility to use every tool available to him to understand the literal sense (Hall, \textit{Reading Scripture}, 154). Chadwick affirms, “He believed that only very few passages in the Bible have no literal sense but only a spiritual meaning” (Chadwick, \textit{The Early Church}, 108). Crouzel comments: “It is surprising to find modern critics making a point of these (meaning Origen ignored the historicity of the texts), when Origen in fact believed in the historicity of the Bible much more than the most traditionalist of our exegetes do today.” See Henri Crouzel, \textit{Origen} (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1989), 63.
\end{thebibliography}
exegetical achievement towards the end of his ministry, and has greatly influenced the study of Romans since then. Origen is known for his allegorical approach to biblical interpretation. However, when it comes to Romans, his exegesis can be considered a literal-historical exposition with careful contextual observations, multifaceted theological discussion, and above all, elevated spiritual implications and insightful applications, demonstrating extensively his hermeneutical principle of explaining Scripture with Scripture—that is, explaining obscure or difficult passages by other clearer passages. In his Homilies on Jeremiah, Origen maintains that in order for the words of his interpretations and exegeses to be faithful and worthy, they will need “two or three witnesses” (Deut. 19:15). Origen interprets the two witnesses as the New and the Old Testament, while the three witnesses are the Gospels, the Prophets, and the Apostles. As a result, we notice that in his Romans commentary, Origen frequently draws from the wealth of the Old Testament Scriptures to develop the main point of the text and expound the spiritual meaning with its doctrinal significance. In spite of his Scriptural knowledge, Origen’s commentary comes, not with forceful imposition, but as a guide or a companion, offering his readers the decision to pick the best interpretation of the several he has to offer.

The approach of Origen in his reading of Romans results in an anti-Gnostic and anti-Marcionite interpretation. Not only does he stress the place of the Old Testament in the whole scriptural canon as the basis of his exegetical principles, but he further defends the

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14 For example: Butterworth, Origen On First Principles, 4.3.6, 297-98.
16 Scheck, “Introduction,” in Origen, Romans, 19-20. “Cf. e.g., 1.4.1; 1.4.4; 2.7.9; 4.1.7; 4.2.9; 5.8.9; 5.9.11; 6.12.11; 7.5.6; 7.5.7; 7.12.7; 8.10.3; 10.42.1” (Ibid., 20, note 83).
17 Ibid., 14, 20-21, 23-24, 27-28, 38. Origen, Romans, 1.3.1; 1.18.2 & 3; 2.10.2; 2.13.27; 4.12.1; 5.6.2; 6.8.8n; 8.2.7n; 8.8.7; 9.2.16n; 10.43.2.
doctrinal themes of justification and human responsibility, grace and free will, faith and
merit, and inner transformation and outward perseverance. While Origen defends the
expression of “justification by faith alone”\textsuperscript{18} and insists on the necessity of the “grace of
faith” as absolutely indispensable to justification,\textsuperscript{19} his “affirmation of free will and an
election based upon antecedent human merit was grounded in his biblically-inspired
opposition to Gnostic thought, in which salvation or damnation was attributed to unalterable
natures, either good or evil.”\textsuperscript{20} For example, in dealing with the Gnostic issue, Origen
reminds his opponents to let their proof text be informed by 2 Tim. 2:20-21, where Paul says
that vessels prepare themselves by their own free will either for honorable or dishonorable
use; specifically, the honorable vessel cleanses himself from the defilements of sin.\textsuperscript{21} Origen
endeavors to make obvious the necessity of human obedience and responsibility in the
process of willing repentance and resolute commitment. However, Origen states that the
grace of God is the ultimate source of those merits (of the heart’s attitude and not of human
moralism) and of the process of salvation. Origen cautions against taking “justification by
faith alone” as a formula to the extreme. The principal reason is to prevent the abuse and
contempt of God’s grace by the “believer” as a license to live in sin (Rom. 6:1, 15),\textsuperscript{22} and to
describe sanctification\textsuperscript{23} as the continuation of God’s justification in the renewal and
consecration of the inner man.\textsuperscript{24}

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., 25. “He is saying that the justification of faith alone suffices, so that the one who only believes is
justified, even if he has not accomplished a single work” (3.9.2-4). Cf. examples of the dying thief on the cross
with Jesus and the woman with the jar of ointment at Jesus’ feet in 3.9.3-4. In Origen’s commentary on
Romans 4:1-8, he concludes that “The root of righteousness, therefore, does not grow out of the works, but
rather the fruit of works grows out of the root of righteousness, that root, of course, of righteousness which God
also credits even apart from works” (4.1.18).
\textsuperscript{19} Scheck, “Introduction,” 31; and Origen, Romans, 4.5.3-7.
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., 30.
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid., 5.7.2-3; 7-9.
\textsuperscript{23} “The fruit of those who have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God consists in sanctification”
As aforementioned, Origen’s exegetical method is to explain difficult and obscure
texts of Scripture with clearer ones found elsewhere in the Gospels, the Apostles’ writings, or
the Old Testament. His mastery of scriptural cross-references and the depth of his spiritual
insights from the texts positioned him to hold a broader view and a balanced perspective in
subsequent readings of the predestination text in Romans 9.

**Chrysostom’s Hermeneutical Principles and His Reading of Romans**

The School of Antioch later became one of the two major centers for the study of
biblical exegesis during the latter half of the Patristic Period. Perhaps the best representative
of this school of interpretation is John Chrysostom. On account of his writings, he is hailed
as a methodical proponent of Antiochene literalism. Scripture to Chrysostom was not only
a text with moral principles and hagiographical lessons; it was above all “A Word spoken, an
inspired Word, a Word incarnate with both human and divine aspects, and thus offered as a

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25 Lucian of Antioch (ca. 240-312 A.D.) established the School of Antioch with the deliberate intention of
restraining the excesses of Alexandrian allegorism. See David S. Dockery, *Biblical Interpretation Then and
Now: Contemporary Hermeneutics in the Light of the Early Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1992),
97. The School of Antioch placed its central emphasis on the literal interpretation of the Scripture. Flourishing
all through the fourth to sixth centuries, the School of Antioch gave rise to several significant expositors and
teachers, including Diodore of Tarsus, Theodore of Mopsuestia, and John Chrysostom (Hall, *Reading
Scripture*, 157). Although there is little doubt that the hermeneutical theories of the Antiochene School were
aimed at the excesses of Alexandrian spiritualities, Froehlich warns us that to make a sharp distinction between
Alexandrian and Antiochene exegesis is to oversimplify the subject matter. Trigg goes a step further to suggest
that the Alexandrian and Antiochene schools of thought represent complementary rather than contradictory and

26 Chrysostom, renowned for his eloquence in preaching and rhetorical skill, aptly earned the title
*Chrysostomos*, or “Golden-Mouthed.” The majority of his writings centered on the exposition of the Bible
27 His homilies on Genesis and Paul’s Epistles were presented methodically in the sense that they treated the
texts verse by verse and often went into great detail. Cf. Chrysostom’s *Homilies on Genesis*, and
*Homilies on Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Thessalonians, Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*, in NPNF Series I,
delicate gesture of considerateness, *synkatabasis.*" It is his high view of the Scripture that undergirded Chrysostom’s wider understanding of Scripture as a thoroughly incarnational one. He firmly believed that just as the Eternal Word became flesh historically through the virgin birth, the divine Word came to us in human thought and languages as the Scripture. Hill, in quoting Chase’s version of Chrysostom’s incarnational accent on the Scripture, notes: “The great principle expressed by the word *synkatabasis* is of deep and wide application. As in the historical Incarnation the Eternal Word became flesh, so in the Bible the glory of God veils itself in the fleshly garment of human thought and human language.” Chrysostom can be considered the earliest writer who upholds an incarnational reading of the Scripture. His address to his readers concerns the need to search for a higher meaning through *theoria* (contemplation). The process of rising above, not apart from, the literal sense is the result of this *synkatabasis* principle.

Chrysostom’s incarnational approach to Romans is clearly seen in his *Argument* to the *Epistle of St. Paul the Apostle to the Romans,* in which he reads Romans as a pastor after the pastoral heart of Paul from two perspectives. First, he reads Romans from the perspective of the external evidences: the time and occasion of writing as compared with Paul’s other epistles, either his earliest epistles (such as Thessalonians and Corinthians), or

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29 Ibid., 34.

30 Incarnational reading suggests a hermeneutical approach similar to Chrysostom’s *Synkatabasis* in that God is seen as coming down to our level to reveal Himself and communicate with us as one of us. Interestingly, the modern hermeneutical reading will pick this divine “accommodation” up as a frontier or missional reading rather than a colonial or magisterial reading of Scripture.

31 The word *theoria* (Greek) means *contemplatio* (Latin) or contemplation, primarily looking at things or seeing with “the eye of the soul” (Matt. 6:22-23). It implies a “fuller sense” or “deeper insight”. Yet *theoria* exegesis should not be confused with allegorical treatment of words or texts. *Theoria* affirms that the fuller spiritual sense cannot be separated from the historic or literal sense; but for the allegorical approach, the spiritual sense is alone important for the life of faith without taking into account its literal meaning. See Vasile Mihoc, “Greek Church Fathers and Orthodox Biblical Hermeneutics,” in *Greek Patristic and Eastern Orthodox Interpretations of Romans,* ed. Daniel Patte and Vasile Mihoc (London: T & T Clark, 2013), 19.
later epistles (prison and pastoral epistles). All these contextual epistles relate to Paul’s missionary labors and are an outpouring of his pastoral love for his people, in which we find expressions of endearment and encouragement (1 Thess. 4: 9, 10; 1 Cor. 15:10; 16:4; Phil. 1:7; Col. 4:7, 17; 2 Tim. 4:6.). Second, Chrysostom reads Romans from the perspective of internal evidence: at such a time, although Paul had not set foot in the city of Rome when he wrote this letter, he opens his heart to them by saying, “For I long to see you, so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong” (Rom. 1:11). Likewise in verses 14 and 15 he writes, “I am a debtor; as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the Gospel to you that are at Rome also.” Towards the conclusion of Romans, Chrysostom finds the apostle bearing testimony once again to the Romans believers—not as a magisterial prophet, but as a fellow missionary servant “because of the grace of God” (Rom. 15:15, 16)—with trust and encouragement where he sees them as “full of goodness, being filled with all knowledge, and able also to admonish others” (Rom. 15:14).

Analysis of Early (Greek) Patristic Exegesis on Romans

Froehlich warns against oversimplifying the sharp distinction between Alexandrian and Antiochene exegesis. More recent scholars are prepared to accept the differing approaches of the Alexandrian and the Antiochene schools as mutually complementing, and as sharing a common outlook. Although the Antiochene hermeneutical orientation offers a more balanced variation to the known abuses of allegorical exegesis in the Alexandrian school, the contrast in practical reality is not as decisive as that. Both schools practice both

33 Ibid., 337.
kinds of exegesis to varying degrees; some more, some less. What essentially sets them apart might be a methodological emphasis or priority, as Froehlich argues.\textsuperscript{35}

However, of equal importance is the recognition of the common outlook of the Alexandrian and Antiochene Schools. Both schools sought for the deeper and higher meaning, versus the plain and surface meaning, of the Scripture as the very Word of God, inspired through the Holy Spirit.\textsuperscript{36} This is characteristic of the predominant patristic exegesis, whether Alexandrian or Antiochene. They never disregard the literal sense of the biblical text; yet beyond the words penned by the apostle, they strive to discover the imbedded spiritual insights and purposes of the text. As a result, these early Church Fathers seem to take a broader view and embrace a more charitable perspective on Pauline thought than those of the Reformation readers, who noticeably narrow Paul’s concerns in Romans to individual justification and absolute/decreed predestination.

The second hermeneutical feature of the patristic period is the steadfast Christocentric emphasis in its interpretations. Both the Alexandrian and Antiochene Fathers endowed their interpretations with the whole mystery of Christ as their exegetical objective. For instance, Irenaeus in his disputation \textit{Against Heresies} contends, “If anyone, therefore, reads the Scriptures with attention, he will find in them an account of Christ, and a foreshadowing of the new calling.”\textsuperscript{37} Athanasius of Alexandria says that the skilled exegete “should consider attentively any biblical text referring to Christ, in order to discern if it referred to his

\textsuperscript{36} In modern critical biblical studies, the role of the Holy Spirit in our interpretations is not admissible. Instead of enshrining the logocentrism of the Enlightenment, Patte urges us to read Romans \textit{with} the patristic Fathers to recover the spirituality that Paul conveys through his letters (Daniel Patte, “Reading Romans with Greek Fathers,” in Patte and Mihoc, \textit{Greek Patristic and Eastern Orthodox}, 204-06, 220).
humanity, to his divinity, or to the relation between the two natures.” Explicitly, Origen, as a Bible commentator, is primarily concerned with a Christological exegesis of the Scriptures. He understands justification as the reception of the righteousness of God, Jesus Christ (“God has made Christ our justice,” 1 Cor. 1:30). These Church Fathers learned to read the Bible as a single book about Christ. Biblically, they considered the major portion of the New Testament as a record of the apostles’ teaching, which they thought to be most probably an allegorical reinterpretation of the entire Old Testament in light of the life of Jesus and His resurrection. Henri de Lubac writes, “Jesus Christ brings about the unity of Scripture, because he is the endpoint and fullness of Scripture. Everything in it is related to him. In the end he is its sole object. Consequently, he is, so to speak, its whole exegesis.” Thus for them, Christology is the norm, the foundation and subject matter of biblical interpretation.

The third trait of patristic exegesis is the aspect of faith and προαίρεσις (free choice, deliberate choice or purposeful selection) in God’s salvific process. As aforementioned, the early Church Fathers were facing a pagan polytheism that combined a promiscuous lifestyle and the deterministic fatalism of early Gnosticism. For example, Chrysostom dealt with these issues through thematic emphases on faith and free choice, which are essential to

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38 Mihoc, “Greek Church Fathers,” 22.
40 Origen, Romans, 3.7.10, 14. Origen cites 1 Cor. 1:30 more than thirty times in the Commentary (Scheck, “Introduction,” in Origen, Romans, 25).
41 Acts 2:42.
42 Examples that illustrate this include Peter’s address to the crowd on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2:14-41 and Paul’s interpretation of Psalm 19:4 as quoted in Romans 10:16-18. Furthermore, in 1 Corinthians Paul says that the things that happened of old to the Israelites were said “as figures” (1 Cor. 10:11). In the book of Ephesians the phrase “and the two shall become one flesh” is understood as a mystery that refers “to Christ and the Church” (Eph. 5:31-32). But the most conspicuous illustration occurs in Galatians 4, where the apostle calls his interpretation of Abraham’s wives, Hagar and Sarah, an allegory. See Robert Luis Wilken, The Spirit of Early Christian Thought: Seeking the Face of God (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 70-71.
Christian existence.\textsuperscript{44} In fact, the emphasis on human choice is so prominent in Chrysostom’s teaching that he uses προαίρεσις and its derivatives over 40 times in his \textit{Homilies on Romans} alone.\textsuperscript{45} Therefore, Gorday maintains that according to Chrysostom, the central purpose of Romans, particularly 9-11, is to reinforce the obedience-character of faith.\textsuperscript{46} While προαίρεσις is used explicitly in Chrysostom’s \textit{Homilies on Romans}, most early ecclesiastical authors who preceded Chrysostom called attention to the decisive factor of human responsibility in operative choice. These authors include Irenaeus,\textsuperscript{47} Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria, Tatian, Origen, Athanasius the Great, Gregory of Nyssa,\textsuperscript{48}

\textsuperscript{44} Faith implies moral transformation through the circumcision of the heart (Rom. 2:22-29 & 6). Cf. Heb. 12:16 on the rejection of Esau, who was godless and immoral.
\textsuperscript{45} George Kalantzis, “‘The voice so dear to me’: Themes from Romans in Theodore, Chrysostom, and Theodoret,” in \textit{Greek patristic and Eastern Orthodox interpretations of Romans}, 91.
\textsuperscript{46} P. Gorday, \textit{Principles of Patristic Exegesis: Romans 9-11 in Origen, John Chrysostom, and Augustine} (New York: E. Mellen Press, 1983), 127. In Chrysostom’s comment on Romans 1:11, he writes: “But when you hear of grace, think not that the reward of resolve on our part is thereby cast aside; for he [Paul] speaks of grace, not of free choice aright” (ibid., Homily 11.12). Then in Rom. 8:7, “For since it was no natural necessity which put the gift into us, but the freedom of choice placed it in our hands, it rests with you henceforward whether this shall be or the other” (ibid., Homily 11.12). Further, in Rom. 11:24, Chrysostom characteristically observes: “And when you hear that he keeps speaking of “according to nature,” and “contrary to nature,” do not suppose that he means the nature that is unchangeable, but he tells us in these words of the probable and the consecutive, and on the other hand of the improbable. For the good things and the bad are not such as are by nature, but by temper and determination [deliberate choice] alone” (ibid., Homily 19.24).
\textsuperscript{47} Irenaeus teaches that human work towards piety or impiety is dependent on their will and choice. In \textit{The Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching}, Irenaeus explains human freedom by reference to the three sons of Noah as a typology for the three groups of people in God’s economy of election: Jews, Gentile believers, and non-believers. “Now of these one fell under a curse, and the two (others) inherited a blessing by reason of their works. For the younger of them, who was called Ham, having mocked his father, and having been condemned of the sin of impiety because of his outrage and unrighteousness against his father, received a curse . . . But Shem and Japheth, his brothers, because of their piety towards their father obtained a blessing” (Irenaeus, \textit{The Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching}, 20). Shem, Ham, and Japheth receive blessings and cursing as a direct result of their freely chosen actions, expressed primarily in how they showed their respect or disrespect toward their father. Therefore Shem and Japheth by their piety are exemplars of those believers who are saved by their faith, and Ham by his impiety becomes the type of those non-believers who are cursed for their lack of faith (cf. Susan L. Graham, “Irenaeus as Reader of Romans 9-11: Olive Branches,” in \textit{Early Patristic Readings of Romans}, ed. Kathy Gaca and L. L. Welborn, 95).
\textsuperscript{48} Justin Martyr, \textit{Dialogue with Trypho} 88.5; Clement of Alexandria, \textit{Stromateia} 4.6; Tatian, \textit{Discourse to the Greek} 7; Origen, \textit{On Principles} 3.1.24; Athanasios the Great, \textit{On the Incarnation} 3.4; Gregory of Nyssa,
Theodore⁴⁹ and Ambrosiaster.⁵⁰ As such, the patristic teachings are charged with much emphasis on moral and human responsibility, as applied through free and deliberate choice, προαίρεσις.

**Latin Patristics:**  
*Ambrosiaster’s Commentary on Romans*

Ambrosiaster⁵¹ belongs to the Latin Patristic tradition of the West together with Tertullian, Cyprian of Carthage and Augustine of Hippo. His commentary on Romans is the oldest Latin commentary to survive from the patristic period.⁵² Like most patristic writers, Ambrosiaster speaks of Christ’s atonement on the cross in universal terms, emphasizing that Christ died for the entire human race, “the righteousness of God was over everyone, both Jews and Gentiles . . . Thus the death of Christ benefits everyone.”⁵³ Ambrosiaster goes on to specify that Christ’s death on the cross “has delivered everyone from hell,”⁵⁴ but he also qualifies that they are justified freely only by faith alone in Christ.⁵⁵ “Paul says this, because in Christ God . . . appointed himself as a future expiation for the human race, if they

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⁴⁹ “Theodore too, is as clear on the subject as Chrysostom, though for Theodore, freedom to choose is inexorably connected with rationality, an eligendi potestas, ‘the capacity to discern among contrary things and to elect that which is greater’” (Kalantzis, “Themes from Romans,” 92).
⁵⁰ In Romans 3:31, Ambrosiaster comments that it is impossible to earn merit by keeping the law. Keeping the law is merely an obligation, and so by doing it, one is merely paying off the debt to God without earning extra merit. However, faith is superior to this because it is not an obligation, but a choice (Gerald Bray, “Ambrosiaster,” in Reading Romans through the Centuries, 30).
⁵¹ Whoever he was, Ambrosiaster was a well-educated Roman lay leader, or perhaps even an elder in the Roman church, who had the responsibility to preach and teach this epistle of the Romans to his congregation (Bray, “Ambrosiaster,” 21-22); cf. Ambrosiaster, Commentaries on Romans and 1-2 Corinthians, trans. and ed. Gerald L. Bray (IL: IVP Academic, 2009), xv-xvi.
⁵² It was composed around 370 AD (Bray, “Introduction,” Ambrosiaster, Romans, xvi). It has been suggested that his commentary was most likely read by Augustine and thus influenced some theological themes in Augustine’s writings (ibid., xxi).
⁵³ Ibid., 3:22-23.
⁵⁴ Ibid.
⁵⁵ Ibid., 3:24.
believed.”56 This is made clear later in his commentary on 5:18, when Ambrosiaster says quite explicitly: “Some people think that because the condemnation was universal, the acquittal also be universal. But this is not so, because not everyone believes.”57

Ambrosiaster is one of the few patristic commentators that has devoted much attention to the topic of Jewish-Gentile relationships in his commentary on Romans. He takes a more sympathetic position regarding the Jewish rejection of Christ, and he explains in his treatment of Romans 9-11 that their hardness of heart was due to their ignorance58 rather than their wickedness or stubbornness. For this reason, Ambrosiaster assents to Paul’s expositions in this passage, where the apostle pleads with his own countrymen “to put their hope of life and salvation in Christ apart from the law, and to teach them that He is the Lord of all things.”59 Another unique feature in Ambrosiaster’s annotations on Romans 8:29-30 and chapter 9 is the manner in which he deals with the doctrines of predestination and Jewish election, taking a low profile in discussing predestination (contrary to what Bray has claimed).60 In these two passages, the word predestine is only mentioned twice (8:29 and 9:13), as opposed to the word foreknown and foreknowledge,61 which is alluded to no less than 16 times. Could this support the premise that the majority of the patristic writers, except for Augustine, were more appreciative of God’s foreknowledge, in His calling and election

56 Ibid., 3:25.
58 Ibid., 10:3, echoing the words of Peter in Acts 3:17.
59 Ibid., preface, 2.
60 “[H]e [Ambrosiaster] was read by Augustine with profit and that certain theological themes generally associated with the great bishop of Hippo can be traced back to him. This is particularly true of his treatment of original sin in Romans 5:12 and of the emphasis he places on predestination” (ibid., xxi).
61 “Those whom God foreknew would believe in him he also chose to receive the promises” (ibid., 8:29). “In the same way he condemned Pharaoh from foreknowledge, knowing that he would not reform, and chose the apostle Paul when he was still persecuting the church, knowing that he would turn out to be good later on” (ibid., 9:14).
of both Jews and Gentiles, than they were interested in the deterministic theology that all humans are preordained to either salvation or damnation?

Augustine’s Modus Inveniendi

Of all the patristic scholars, Augustine is considered to be the one that has exerted the greatest influence on the expositions on Romans and on predestination. This is especially true for the Reformation Period. In recent decades, much attention has been directed to Augustine’s reading of Romans, as scholars seek to analyze and comprehend the theological concerns and religious preoccupations of his time, as well as the impact of his reading on Paul’s text.

De Doctrina Christiana

Augustine was strongly influenced by the Alexandrian and the Antiochene schools of interpretation. However, he also broke new ground in the interpretation of the Bible in his work De doctrina christiana (DDC, On Christian Doctrine/Teaching). In the first three books of DDC, Augustine deals with the essential preparations and principles required for a correct reading and interpretation of Scripture. Augustine simply states the approach and practice for interpreting Scriptures as modus inveniendi quae intelligenda sunt, “all interpretation of Scripture depends on the mode of ascertaining the proper meaning [of the text].” The goal of scriptural interpretation is for the interpreter to better practice the

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62 As far as we know, Augustine only wrote 3 complete commentaries: Genesis, Psalms and Galatians. He had attempted to write one on Romans but found it overwhelming.

63 Martin, “Modus Inveniendi Paulum,” in Patte and TeSelle, Engaging Augustine on Romans, 63.

64 “Duae sunt res quibus nititur omnis tractatio Scripturarum, modus inveniendi quae intellecta sunt et modus preferendi quae intellecta sunt” (DDC, I.1.1). “There are two things on which all interpretation of Scripture depends: the mode of ascertaining the proper meaning, and the mode of making known the meaning when it is ascertained.” See Augustine, On Christian Doctrine, trans. J. F. Shaw (NY: Dover Publications, Inc., 2009), I.1.1.
commandment of loving God and our neighbor.\textsuperscript{65} However, the warning is not to go astray by taking another meaning out of the Scriptural text other than what the writer has intended.\textsuperscript{66} The \textit{modus inveniendi} suggested by Augustine includes the following: the usage of the original languages,\textsuperscript{67} interpreting the more difficult passages in light of clearer ones,\textsuperscript{68} and using the aids of history, natural science and the mechanical arts in the exegetical process.\textsuperscript{69} In addition, there is a need to consult and compare several other translations of Scripture, especially when one encounters difficult ambiguous words or idioms.\textsuperscript{70} As to the use of rhetoric and dialectic, in which Augustine was well trained, he emphasizes that rhetoric is not to be used so much for determining the meaning of the text, as for expressing the meaning when it is ascertained. But the art of dialectic, which he utilizes extensively, has exegetical implications in that it deals with inference, definition and classification, which can provide great assistance in the discovery of the text’s meaning.\textsuperscript{71}

\textbf{Distinctive Themes in Reading Romans}

Augustine’s exegetical studies show great a respect for the text and a high view of the Scriptures. Herewith we see that he not only admonishes the student of the Scriptures to surrender to the text and allow the Spirit to transform the interpreter by such an encounter,

\textsuperscript{65} Ibid., I.35.39. Mk. 12:30, 31.
\textsuperscript{66} Ibid., I.36.41. Martin argues that Augustine’s intention is to say that the meaning of the text must not come from the “investigator” but from “the investigated.” See Thomas F. Martin, “Modus Inveniendi Paulum: Augustine, Hermeneutics, and his Reading of Romans,” in \textit{Engaging Augustine on Romans: Self, Context, and Theology in Interpretation}, ed. Daniel Patte and Eugene TeSelle (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2002), 64.
\textsuperscript{67} DDC, II.11.16.
\textsuperscript{68} Ibid., II.12.17.
\textsuperscript{69} Ibid., II.28-30.
\textsuperscript{70} Ibid., II.14.21.
\textsuperscript{71} Ibid., II.37.55. Martin explains: “Often a text of scripture will be the center of a formal debate between Augustine and an opponent, but just as often the debate seems to be taking place within Augustine’s own mind as he weighs possibilities, applies the laws of logic and dialectic and places himself firmly \textit{‘in progressu disputationis’} in order to understand a text” (Martin, “Modus Inveniendi Paulum,” 67).
but to enter the reading of the Scriptures led by the fear of God\textsuperscript{72} and to seek God’s will with a meek and pious disposition.\textsuperscript{73} This attitude of reverence and pious disposition is a key attribute in the reading of Romans, and the Church Fathers model it well for us. Patte, in his reflection on reading Romans with the Greek and Latin Fathers, highlights the need for going back to their “source of refreshing water” in recovering “the spirituality that Paul conveys through his letters.”\textsuperscript{74} Another pursuit that is evident in Augustine’s biblical reading is the quest for true happiness by returning “to our Father’s home,”\textsuperscript{75} where the Trinity is the true and ultimate object of enjoyment and happiness.\textsuperscript{76} Augustine emphasizes this practice specifically in his \textit{Propositions from the Epistle to the Romans} and \textit{Unfinished Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans}, where the Holy Spirit of the triune God occurs no fewer than 39 and 75 times in each writing respectively, and the term Trinity appears no fewer than 14 times in the second commentary. Within 4 years of composing these two writings on Romans, Augustine began his definitive work on the doctrine of the Trinity, \textit{De trinitate}\textsuperscript{77} (399-419). Augustine was disturbed by lingering Arianism, which denied the true divinity of the Son and claimed that the Son was a subordinate entity to God the Father. Augustine defends in this volume the Pro-Nicene Trinitarianism decreeing that the Father, the Son and

\textsuperscript{72} Augustine lists 7 steps to gaining wisdom in reading the Scriptures. First is to “be led by the fear of God to seek the knowledge of His will, what He commands us to desire and what to avoid.” Second is to have one’s heart subdued by piety. Third, the goal of knowledge is to love God for His own sake, and to love one’s neighbor for God’s sake. Fourth is to have a resolution in hungering and thirsting after righteousness. Fifth is the counsel to cleanse one’s soul from the filth that it has contracted. Sixth is the counsel that leads to the purification of heart so that one’s eyes may see God. Seventh, one ascends to wisdom, since the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom (\textit{DDC}, II.7.9-11).

\textsuperscript{73} Ibid., II.9.14.

\textsuperscript{74} Patte, “A Western Biblical Scholar,” in \textit{Greek Patristic and Eastern Orthodox}, 220.

\textsuperscript{75} Ibid., I.3-4.

\textsuperscript{76} Ibid., I.5.

\textsuperscript{77} This volume is considered as, and has been studied by later theologians as, the key patristic writing to systematize the doctrine of the Trinity.
the Holy Spirit are *homoousios* (one single and the same substance or essence)\(^\text{78}\) and one in divinity.

Another distinctive trait that stands out in Augustine’s two short expositions on Romans is the prominence of the theme of *grace*. This word *grace* is mentioned no fewer than 30 and 35 times, respectively, within these two short books. There is no doubt that God’s grace had been profoundly engraved in Augustine’s theological mind through his conversion from his own unruly and debauched lifestyle. In his *Confessions*, the significant theme of *grace* emerges—Augustine makes it very clear that it is by God’s grace that one seeks rest in God and finds pardon for his sins.\(^\text{79}\)

Consequently, Augustine carries this theme of *grace* into his *Propositions from the Epistle to the Romans*, where he asserts:

> Belief is our work, but good deeds are His who gives the Holy Spirit to believers. This argument was used against certain Jews who, once they believed in Christ, both glori ed in the works they did before receiving grace and claimed that they had merited this same grace of the Gospel by their own good works, though only the person who has already received grace can do good works. Moreover, the nature of grace is such that the call precedes merit, reaching the sinner when he had deserved only damnation.\(^\text{80}\)

Furthermore, he states, “Paul does not take away the freedom of the will, but says our will does not suffice unless God helps us, making us merciful so that we can do good works


\(^{79}\) Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. Henry Chadwick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), I.5. “I will love Thee, O Lord, and thank Thee, and confess unto Thy name; because Thou hast forgiven me these so great and heinous deeds of mine. To Thy grace I ascribe it, and to Thy mercy, that Thou hast melted away my sins as it were ice. To Thy grace I ascribe also whatsoever I have not done of evil; for what might I not have done, who even loved a sin for its own sake? Yea, all I confess to have been forgiven me; both what evils I committed by my own willfulness, and what by Thy guidance I committed not” (ibid., II.7).

through the gift of the Holy Spirit.” Augustine subsequently identifies this gift of the Holy Spirit as the “grace and peace from God our father and our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Augustine, in his teaching on predestination, became the champion of the doctrine of God’s grace, proclaiming that our salvation is in total dependence on God’s mercy. “Between predestination and grace,” writes Augustine, “there is only this difference, that predestination is preparation for grace, while grace is already the giving itself.” In his On Admonition and Grace, he explicates that the believer’s salvation is fully and wholly grace. The significance of such predestination is that it guards against human pride and the deep-seated human disposition toward self-justification.

Consequently, for those who need to be freed there remains only the grace of Him who frees. So it is that no flesh may pride itself before Him . . . so that, it is written, “Let him who takes pride, take pride in the Lord.” Hence it is that in this place of afflictions, where the life of man on earth is a warfare, “strength is made perfect in weakness.” And why this kind of strength? In order that he who takes pride, may take pride in the Lord.

For Augustine, the gospel is itself a pure gift; yet human nature tends to substitute good works and moral attainment for gratuitous faith in Christ and Christ alone. Augustinian predestination by grace thus safeguards humans, as fallen beings bent on self-justification, from turning “the purest announcement of the purest life-bringing gift of God into its death-dealing antithesis.”

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81 Ibid., 62.1.
83 Rom. 9:15, 18.
85 12.37.
86 1 Cor. 1:30-31. Augustine, On Admonition and Grace, 12.37.
87 2 Cor. 12:9. Ibid.
88 2 Cor. 10:17. Ibid.
Predestination in the Patristic Reading of Romans 9

From the previous indications of the Early Church Fathers’ hermeneutical emphases, we can conclude that three essential premises permeate their interpretation of Romans 9: a) freedom of the human will, b) divine foreknowledge in the doctrine of predestination, and c) opportunities for repentance and the responsibility of faith. As such, these perspectives shed light on how the Early Church Fathers generally understood predestination, with the destiny of individuals as the primary focus. They attempted to rationalize God’s election in connection with the following premises:

Freedom of the Human Will

The insistence on human choice was largely in response to the characteristic of deterministic fatalism in early Gnosticism. While the Early Church Fathers maintained the justice of God, the post-apostolic and most of the post-Nicene Fathers were resolute to show that human destinies were not bound by the dictates of distant fate or a divine secret plan, and that each individual was held responsible for choosing the salvation offered by God in the person of Jesus Christ.

Origen was a leading and forthright defender of human free choice against those in his day who held to some form of divine or fatalistic determinism. Against this position, Origen argued:

Now to this we have to answer, that the language of the apostle does not assert that to will evil is of God, or to will good is of Him (and similarly with respect to doing better and worse); but that to will in a general way, and to run in a general way, (are from Him). For as we have from God (the property) of being living things and human beings, so also have we that of willing generally, and, so to speak, of motion in general. And as, possessing (the property) of life and of motion, and of moving, e.g., these members, the hands or the feet, we could not rightly say that we had from God this species of motion, whereby we moved to strike, or destroy, or take away another’s goods, but that we had received from Him simply the generic power of
motion, which we employed to better or worse purposes; so we have obtained from God (the power) of acting, in respect of our being living things, and (the power) to will from the Creator while we employ the power of will, as well as that of action, for the noblest objects, or the opposite.  

Origen also charged those who taught divine determinism for mishandling Scriptures: “And certain of those who hold different opinions misuse these passages, themselves also almost destroying free will by introducing ruined natures incapable of salvation, and others saved which it is impossible can be lost.”  

In his commentary on Romans 8:30 with regard to the doctrine of predestination, Origen cites the example of Judas in this issue of human choice:

Judas did not betray because the prophets had predicted it, but because he was going to be a traitor the prophets predicted these things that he was going to do out of the wickedness of his own purpose. For surely Judas had it within his power to become like Peter and John had he wanted to . . . In order that you might know that the cause of each person’s salvation is not placed in the foreknowledge of God but in one’s own purpose and actions [emphasis added].”

Origen also alludes to I Cor. 9:27, where Paul directs his attention to his own human disciplinary choice, lest he be rejected at the end by his own falling away. Furthermore, in explaining the rejection of Esau, Origen explains that it was his just desert for his choice according to the movements of his mind, which had accumulated demerits.

A different office is prepared by the Creator for each one in proportion to the degree of his merit, on this ground, indeed, that each one, in respect of having been created by God an understanding, or a rational spirit, has, according to the movements of his mind and the feelings of his soul [emphasis added], gained for himself a greater or less amount of merit, and has become either an object of love to God, or else one of dislike to Him.

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91 Ibid., III.I.8, 308.
92 Origen, Romans, 7.8.6.
93 Origen, De principiis, II.IX.7, 292.
Chrysostom was among those who supported the reality of human free will. Without the divine provision of grace and His gift of righteousness in Jesus, no one can be saved. However, human action in terms of προαίρεσις or one of its synonyms is a necessary operating factor in any interaction with the divine instruction. Through his analysis of human nature and choice (or προαίρεσις), Chrysostom was convinced that the beauty of God’s creation is basically good, and that the true source of evil is to be found in a perverted or disobedient use of choice or προαίρεσις. Thus he contends that if all men are not saved, it does not demonstrate God’s sovereign election but the reality of free will. For this reason, Chrysostom comments on Rom. 9:22-24:

Because when he says, ‘it is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs,’ he does not deprive us of free will, but shows that all is not one’s own, for that it requires grace from above. For it is binding on us to will, and also to run: but to confide not in our own labors, but in the love of God toward humanity.

In dealing with the issue of the power of the potter over the clay in verses 20 and 21, he comments that this metaphor allows for human free will:

Here it is not to do away with free-will that he says this, but to show, up to what point we ought to obey God . . . And yet not even is it on the potter that the honor and the dishonor of the things made of the lump depends, but upon the use made by those that handle them, so here also it depends on the free choice.

Again, earlier in his thirteenth homily on Romans, he writes:

Now the essence of the soul and body and of that choice (προαίρεσις) are not the same, for the first two are God’s works, and the other is a motion from

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94 Christopher A. Hall, “John Chrysostom,” in Reading Romans through the Centuries, 47. Eastern Church Fathers considered “freedom of choice” a property and privilege of human nature that distinguishes human beings from animals or inanimate things. Hall asserts, “The classical definition of προαίρεσις was the choice of one thing in preference to another. Aristotle, as Edward Nowak observes, defined προαίρεσις as a choice formed by reflection and specifically referred to προαίρεσις as a choice between good and evil. W. A. Oldfather normally translates Epictetus’s use of προαίρεσις as ‘freedom of choice’ or ‘moral purpose.’ . . . Nowak notes that προαίρεσις is opposed to both necessity (ἀνάγκη) and astral determinism” (ibid., 47-48).
96 Ibid., Homily 16.20-21.
ourselves towards whatever we please to direct it. For willing is indeed natural (ἐπιθυμεῖν), and is from God: but willing on this wise is our own, and from our own mind. 97

The whole point of the argument for Chrysostom is that the fundamental principle of salvation, by faith and not by the works of the law, does not take away our human free will.

In his early writings, Augustine of Hippo holds a similar position to the Greek and Latin Fathers in placing a great deal of emphasis on free will, 98 the foreknowledge of God 99 and the moral responsibility of humans, whereby he refutes the Gnostic and Manichean doctrine of determinism. However, his disputations against the Pelagians heresy mark a turning point. Augustine abandons some of his earlier claims and argues instead that God predestines individuals to salvation by His freedom, while others are “left by the divine judgment in the mass of perdition.” 100 In spite of this shift, Augustine maintains the necessity of free will, though he resolutely gives primacy to grace over free will. In his Retractations, when Augustine reconsiders his views in To Simplician—On Various

97 Ibid., Homily 13.19-20. Cf. Chrysostom on “you obeyed from the heart” (Rom. 6:17), where he comments, “For the obedience from the heart shows the free will. But the being delivered, hints at the assistance from God” (ibid., Homily 11.17).

98 In On Grace and Free Choice, Augustine explains explicitly that grace does not take away free will. In his comments on Matt. 19:10, Augustine writes, “there are both the gift of God and free will” (4.7). What Augustine is saying is that there is no contradiction between divine intervention and human free will: “Therefore, though God foreknows what we shall will in the future, this does not imply that we do not make use of our will.” See Augustine, The Problem of Free Choice, trans. Mark Pontifex (New York: Newman Press, 1955), 3.3.7. Augustine asserts once more in the same writing, “We could not act rightly except by this free choice of will” (ibid., 2.18.47; Rist, Augustine, 278). The rationale here is that humans cannot desire the good without having the capacity to choose. Augustine does contend that the exhortations of scripture would be pointless unless human beings have free will. See Augustine, On Grace and Free Choice, in On the Free Choice of the Will, On Grace and Free Choice, and Other Writings (NY: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 2.2.

99 Augustine answers that foreknowledge does not imply causation. “When you remember past events you do not compel them to have happened, and in the same way God does not compel future events to happen by His foreknowledge of them” (Augustine, The Problem of Free Choice, 3.4.11).

100 Augustine, DDP 14.35, and On Nature and Grace 5.5.
Questions, he admits: “I have tried hard to maintain the free choice of the human will, but the grace of God prevailed.”

There are further considerations as to the extent of human free will. The problem is inescapably tied to the issue of the foreknowledge of God: if God foreknows each decision of every human before it occurs, how can it be maintained that the human choice is not affected by God’s foreknowledge? In the City of God, Augustine fully discusses the topic of human freedom and the foreknowledge of God in the setting of Cicero’s earlier refutation of the foreknowledge of future events. In his disagreement with the conclusion of Cicero, Augustine amplifies the discussion by stating that, because human acts of will are the causes of human activities, human wills are in the order of causes; and these causes are, for God, considered to be fixed, and are fully contained in his foreknowledge. Between the two choices, human freedom and God’s foreknowledge, Augustine believes that God’s foreknowledge includes the future freedom of the will. “Human Freedom” and the “Foreknowledge of God” are each valid and fundamentally connected, implying that human will is an efficient cause known and anticipated by God. When God calls us by His grace, His call speaks to our free will. In Rom. 9:16 and 18, Augustine likewise submits that freedom of the human will is a necessary part of God’s election through the help of His mercy: “Paul does not take away the freedom of the will but says that our will is not

103 Ibid.
104 Ibid., XIV.11: “For God in his foreknowledge anticipated both results: he knew beforehand how evil the man would become whom God himself had created good; he also knew what good, even so, he would bring out of man’s evil.”
105 Augustine, Propositions from the Epistle to the Romans, 60.15.
sufficient unless God helps us . . . Nevertheless, man’s free will remains, whether for belief in God so that mercy follows, or for impiety followed by punishment.”

Theodoret of Cyrus is a Patristic theologian and commentator from the Eastern Orthodox Church. In his commentary on Romans 9, he elaborates on the necessity of human choice based on the capacity of human reasoning:

If you were not independent and had no free will to choose what has to be done, instead being subject to the necessity of the divine will, you would keep silent in the fashion of lifeless things, content with the arrangement. But being endowed with reason, you say and do what you please and also have no liking for what happens, looking instead for the reasons for the divine arrangements.

In balancing human free will and God’s justice, Theodoret explicates in verses 20-21 that sin is the product of human will: “You . . . are not constrained by natural necessities nor transgress in defiance of free will; instead you embrace evil willingly, and accept the hardship of virtue of set purpose. The sentence of the God of all is therefore right and just: he justly punishes the sinners for presuming to do this with free will.”

Theodoret and the Early Church Fathers stress that human reasoning is the basis of free choice and vice versa. Whether for virtue or for sin, each individual is equally capable of choosing with free will.

**Divine Foreknowledge in the Doctrine of Predestination**

Most of the Early Church Fathers approached Romans 9 with the notion of the foreknowledge of God as an explanation of God’s decisions of love and hate, election and

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106 Ibid., 62.1, 13.
109 Ibid., 9:20-21, 103.
110 Even Pelagius in his commentary on Romans 8 and 9 states that God saves those whom He foreknows will believe and that God’s choice exists already in foreknowledge. See Pelagius, *Commentary on St. Paul’s Epistle to the Romans*, trans. Theodore de Bruyn (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 8:29 and 9:10. However, “His foreknowledge does not prejudice the sinner if he is willing to repent” (ibid., 9:12).
rejection in the course of human history. God’s foreknowledge was consistently used to explain how God predetermined human destiny in conjunction with human freedom of choice.

In his *Against Heresies*, Irenaeus, a disciple of Polycarp who in turn was one of the disciples of the apostle John, explains Rom. 9:10-13 in terms of divine foreknowledge. In commenting on the statement, “Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated,” he writes: “Our God, one and the same, is also their God, who knows hidden things, who knoweth all things before they can come to pass.”

Origen understands predestination in the light of both God’s foreknowledge and His ordinary knowledge whereby “those who are foreknown by God are those upon whom God had placed His own love and affection because He knew what sort of persons they were . . . as far as pertains to this ordinary knowledge, God not only knows those who are his own but also he is not ignorant of those who goastray from him.” Nevertheless, this foreknowledge of God is not placed in the works of the flesh, but in the grace of His promises to hold His own in love and unite them to Himself. Origen’s clearest statement of God’s foreknowledge of human choice in the divine determination of human destiny is found in his commentary on Rom. 9:17:

It is certain that God not only knows the purpose and will of each man, but he also foreknows this. But though he knows this and knows it in advance, being a good and just steward, he makes use of the affections and the purpose of each individual to accomplish the works that the mind and will of each person has chosen.

112 Origen, *Romans*, 7.8.3; cf. 7.15.4.
113 Ibid.
114 Ibid., 7.16.6.
Chrysostom reckons in Romans 9:10 that “He Who knows beforehand things to come as well as things present, and has a clear knowledge that they will make themselves undeserving of the promises, and therefore will not receive any of the things specified.”

He comments on 9:11-13 with the following: “Because He does not wait, as man does, to see from the issue of their acts the good and him who is not so, but even before these He knows which is the wicked and which not such.” On 9:15 he states, “For He that knows the secrets of the hearts, He only knows for a certainty who deserve a crown, and who punishment and vengeance.” According to Chrysostom, Paul argues here that God elected Jacob and rejected Esau through His knowledge of those who will be worthy or not.

Ambroisiaster in his commentary on Rom. 9:6-7 states, “What Paul wants us to understand is that not all the children of Abraham are worthy . . . but only those . . . whom God foreknew would receive His promise, whether they are Jews or Gentiles.”

Further along in 9:11, Ambroisiaster remarks,

Paul proclaims God’s foreknowledge by citing these events, because nothing can happen in the future other than what God already knows . . . His foreknowledge chose the one and rejected the other . . . However, although God knew what would happen, He is not a respecter of persons, and condemns nobody before he sins, nor does He reward anyone until he conquers.

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115 Chrysostom, Homily 16.10. Another translation reads: “God foresees both the present and the future; God clearly knows that they will make themselves unworthy of the promises and, as a result, that they will actually receive nothing God promised” (Romans: Interpreted by Early Christian Commentators, J. Patout Burns and Constantine Newman [Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publ., 2012], 221—the editors have wrongly placed this quotation under Romans 9:6-7).
117 Ibid., 16.15.
118 Mihoc summarizes, “By this foreknowledge, God does not deprive us of freewill. If from the Jews some are now vessels of wrath, and some of mercy, it is from their own free choice” (Vasile Mihoc, “Paul and the Jews: According to St John Chrysostom’s Commentary on Romans 9-11,” in Greek Patristic and Eastern Orthodox Interpretations of Romans, 70).
120 Ibid., 9:11.
Concerning the hardening of Pharaoh’s heart, he claims, “In the same way He condemned Pharaoh from foreknowledge, knowing that he would not reform, and chose the apostle Paul when he was still persecuting the church, knowing that he would turn out to be good later on.”

Cyril of Alexandria teaches that according to Romans 9:14-18, “God’s foreknowledge would not have resulted in an unjust decision.” Likewise, Theodoret of Cyrus in explaining the selection between Jacob and Esau asserts that foreknowledge does not take away human choice but is in keeping with foreseen merit:

Yet one was dear to God, the other unworthy of the divine care. God did not await the outcome of events, but instead foretold the difference between them while they were still in the womb. Now, He foretold it from knowing in advance their purpose; election, far from being unjust, is in keeping with people’s purpose . . . So, instead of attending to nature, He looks for virtue alone.

**Opportunities for Repentance and the Responsibility of Faith**

Divine determinism does not withhold anyone from the salvation of God through Jesus Christ. Rather, God’s saving plan and will are dependent upon a human’s willingness to repent and the responsibility of acting out one’s faith and obedience (cf. Rom. 1:5). Origen extensively discusses this involvement of human will in salvation. In his explanation of Romans 9:16—“So, then, it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who

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121 Ibid., 9:14. Cf. also his commentaries on 9:16, 18, 21 and 27.
123 Commenting on Romans 8:30, Theodoret insists on the principle of future human choice being foresaw by God: “Let no one say, however, the foreknowledge is responsible for them: it was not the foreknowledge that made them like that—rather, God from afar foresaw the future as God . . . The God of all from a distance knew everything as God; He did not apply pressure to such-and-such a one to practice virtue, nor to another to commit evil . . . He commends those who do good and punishes those who willingly embrace evil” (Theodoret, *Romans*, 8:30, 95).
124 Ibid., 9:10-12, 101.
shows mercy”—Origen points to the fact that salvation is entirely the result of God’s saving acts; nonetheless, it is contiguous with human faith and diligence.125

In the illustration of the hardening of Pharaoh’s heart, Origen surmises that though Pharaoh was a man of consummate malice, God was unwilling to inflict immediate and total revenge on him. God in His patience did not bar the capacity for Pharaoh’s repentance. Pharaoh had the ability to obey, but he despised the richness of God’s mercy and chose to disobey. Eventually God had to cast him aside by hardening his heart to greater contempt. Therefore, it is not that God hardens the heart of whom He wants, but it is the one who is unwilling to comply with God’s patience whose heart becomes hardened.126 “Since it was possible for him to obey (in which case he would certainly have obeyed, as not being earthy, when hard pressed by the signs and wonders), God needs him to be disobedient to a greater degree, in order that He may manifest His mighty deeds for the salvation of the multitude, and therefore hardens his heart.”127 Hence, Origen understands the words “God hardened” as describing the result of Pharaoh’s continuous disobedience and not the intention of God acting in perfect goodness.128

Origen cites 2 Tim. 2:20-21 to comment on the example of the potter’s clay, the problem being that from the same lump of clay some are made into vessels of honor and some into vessels of dishonor:

125 “As, then, if we were to say that such a building is not the work of the builder, but of God, and that it was not owing to the successful effort of the watcher, but of the God who is over all, that such a city suffered no injury from its enemies, we should not be wrong, it being understood that something also had been done by human means... As if also it were said with regard to husbandry what also is actually recorded: ‘I planted, Apollos watered; and God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase’” (Origen, De principiis, from the Greek version, III.I.18, 321-23).
126 Origen, Romans, 7.16.8.
127 Origen, De principiis, from the Greek version, III.I.8, 308.
128 Thomas P. Scheck, Origen and the History of Justification: The Legacy of Origen’s Romans Commentary on Romans (University of Notre Dame Press, 2008), 153.
Here he has explained this openly. He says, “For if anyone should cleanse himself from these things”—doubtless, from the defilements of sin—“he will be,” he says, “a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful to the Lord, prepared for every good work.” It follows, therefore, that whoever has not cleansed himself and has not washed away the stains of sin through repentance, he would be a vessel for reproach. But even if, through the hardness of his mind and the impenitence of his heart, he should grow in wickedness and should completely scorn being converted, he will now become not merely a vessel of reproach but a vessel of wrath. So then, the understanding that he closed off there to those who demanded it in an unworthy fashion here he throws open for those desiring in a worthy manner, through which even that which he set forth before about Jacob and Esau is explained more clearly. For, in order for Jacob to have been a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful to the Lord, prepared for every good work, his soul had cleansed itself; and God, seeing its purity, having the authority to make from the same mass one vessel for honor, another for reproach, he made Jacob, who, as we have said, had indeed cleansed himself, into a vessel for honor [emphasis added].

Origen teaches “that God’s dealings with people can change depending on their disposition toward God,” as we see with Jacob. However, Paul warns us that scorn and resistance to God’s grace can lead us to become not only dishonorable but a vessel of wrath, such as Esau.

Beside προαιρεσις, Chrysostom relates determination to faith, defining faith as our human contribution to God’s grace of salvation: “For He died for us, and further reconciled us, and brought us to Himself, and gave us grace unspeakable. But we brought faith only as our contribution. And so he says, ‘by faith, unto this grace.’” The universality of this grace is proclaimed to both Jews and Gentiles, Moses and Pharaoh, vessels of honor and dishonor waiting with longsuffering for all to come to repentance.

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129 Origen, Romans, 7.17.6-7.
130 Mark Reasoner, Romans in Full Circle: A History of Interpretation (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 106. Likewise, Pelagius teaches that “God’s foreknowledge does not prejudge the sinner, if he is willing to repent” (Pelagius, Romans, 9:10).
131 Chrysostom, Homily 9.2.
132 Ibid., 17.11-13.
For neither had God left out anything of the things likely to recover him . . . “He endured him with much long-suffering,” being willing to bring him to repentance. For had He not willed this, then He would not have been thus long-suffering . . . God, however, being very good, shows the same kindness to both. For it was not those in a state of salvation only to whom He showed mercy, but also Pharaoh, as far as His part went. For of the same long-suffering, both they and he had the advantage. And if he was not saved, it was quite owing to his own will: since, as for what concerns God, he had as much done for him as they who were saved.\textsuperscript{133}

For Chrysostom, divine predestination does not bar anyone from the proclaimed grace of God through Jesus Christ, irrespective of person. God’s longsuffering incessantly provides opportunities for repentance through faith and \textit{complete obedience}.\textsuperscript{134} On the contrary, judgment is reserved when humans scorn His longsuffering by their own vice and unwillingness to repent.

Ambroisiaster takes the example of Saul and David in Rom. 9:16 to stress the necessity and responsibility of repentance acted out in faith and obedience.

David and Saul were two different people. Look at their stories and ask yourself what happened to them after God’s judgment. Did Saul do what was right after he was refused mercy? Did he prove that God’s judgment was unjust? Did David, after receiving mercy, turn his back on God? Or did he remain in Him from whom he received mercy?\textsuperscript{135}

**Summary**

The early Church Fathers take an interest in the book of Romans that is coloured by their own awareness of the idolatry and immorality within the pagan world. Besides countering the surrounding cultural lifestyle in these early centuries, these Fathers engage the rising false teachings of Gnosticism, Arianism and Pelagianism. In doing so, they draw on the writings of the apostles, especially the book of Romans. Among the patristic readers of

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  \item \textsuperscript{133} Ibid., 16.22-24.
  \item \textsuperscript{134} Ibid., 16.20-21.
  \item \textsuperscript{135} Ambrosiaster, \textit{Romans}, 9:16.
\end{itemize}
the book of Romans, four of these writers stand out among the rest: Origen, Chrysostom, Ambrosiaster and Augustine. Many of these Ante-Nicene and Post-Nicene Church Fathers address the Gnostic teaching of deterministic fatalism of their day, while holding to their own clear and definitive interpretation of Romans 9 and other biblical passages. By commenting on the course of biblical history, they expound on the freedom of human choice, divine foreknowledge and the universal opportunity for repentance, all towards an attempt to clarify God’s election. Likewise, the Patristic writers from both East and West give prominence to all three of these essential premises in their reading of Romans 9, emphasizing faithful living and moral responsibility. Such a religious thirst for spiritual insight into the text gives them a broader perspective and a more charitable interpretation of Pauline thought in Romans 9. God’s foreknowledge is consistently invoked to explain how God predetermined human destiny with due consideration to His gift of human free will. While God’s grace provides ample opportunities for individuals to repent from their wicked ways, it requires those who hear His bidding to respond by faith and obedience. Nonetheless, except for Tertullian (c. 160-225 CE) and Ambrosiaster, who are inclined to see the election and rejection of Jacob and Esau as corporate, most of the early fathers explicitly teach that individuals are predestined based on their own actions.

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136 Clement of Alexandria and Theodore.
137 Augustine differs from these early Church Fathers, and even his own earlier writings, in teaching election through efficacious grace, which brings about not only the ability but the effectual response in faith. In both On the Grace of Christ and his commentary on Romans, he even compares faith to merit (“Merit of Faith,” Augustine, On the Grace of Christ, ed. Philip Schaff (2015), Chapter 34; “Propositions from the Epistle to the Romans,” 62.12, 35). In addition, he claims that God predestines individual salvation by His freedom, and that he leaves others in the mass of perdition. Augustine is thus considered the forerunner of the deterministic teaching of double predestination.
138 “Accordingly, since the people or nation of the Jews is anterior in time, and ‘greater’ through the grace of primary favour in the Law, whereas ours is understood to be ‘less’ in the age of times, as having in the last era of the world attained the knowledge of divine mercy: beyond doubt, through the edict of the divine utterance, the prior and ‘greater’ people—that is, the Jewish—must necessary serve the ‘less,’ and the ‘less’ people—that is, the Christian—overcome the ‘greater’” (Tertullian, “An Answer to the Jews,” Trans. S. Thelwall, in The Ante-Nicene Fathers, vol. 3, Latin Christianity: Its Founder, Tertullian [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1950]),
Regardless of the strengths of each Church Father, these patristic writers as a whole present a spiritual feast for the modern student of the Scripture to ponder and to digest. How then do we make sense of the integration of patristic exegesis on Romans? While not uncritically accepting everything they say, our reading of the patristic exegeses needs to appreciate the fact that these Fathers read their Bible within the context and practice of prayer, worship and spiritual formation. Though they might have had fewer linguistic, historical and theological tools available to them in their study of Scripture than the modern exegete, these exegeses of interest present indispensable theological perspectives and patristic presuppositions of the Bible’s truthfulness, which are vital supplements for much modern commentary. The patristic fathers purposefully focused on the nonnegotiables of faith when they expounded the text. “For the fathers, then, hermeneutics is not an objective science that can be practiced by any scholar within any context. Rather hermeneutics in Christ becomes a spiritual, communal, interpretive art.” In applying due diligence to this Patristic Period of the exegesis of Romans, this section has shed light on the formative and directive legacy that these Fathers have bestowed on the history of Christian thought.

Chapter 1, 151). Ambrosiaster states: “Isaac was born as a type of the Savior, but Jacob and Esau were born as types of two peoples, believers and unbelievers, who come from the same source but are nevertheless very different. Each of these individuals stands for a whole nation, because believers and unbelievers are both united in a single people. One person represents the entire race, not because he is their physical ancestor but because he shares their relationship to God. There are children of Esau who are children of Jacob, and vice versa. It is not because Jacob is praised that all those descended from him are worthy to be called his children. Nor is it because Esau was rejected that all those descended from him are condemned, for we see that Jacob the deceiver had believing children, and Esau had children who were faithful and dear to God. There is no doubt that there are many unbelieving children of Jacob, for all the Jews, whether they are believers or unbelievers, have their origin in him. And that there are good and faithful children of Esau is proved by the example of Job, who was a descendant of Esau, five generations away from Abraham, and therefore Esau’s grandson” (Ambrosiaster, Romans, 9:10). Though there is no mention of Job as a descendant of Esau in the Scripture, Ambrosiaster could have gathered this information from extra-biblical source(s).

139 Hall, Reading Scripture, 177.
140 Calvin acknowledges their authority, “Of the ancients who have, by their piety, learning, holiness, and also by their age, gained so much authority.” See Calvin, Romans, xxiv.
141 Hall, Reading Scripture, 195.
The Medieval Hermeneutics: Emphases of the Medieval Reading of Romans

The Scriptures stood at the heart of medieval culture and education. Culturally, the Bible was a major reference source for writers, musicians, artists and artisans in any number of social settings. Educationally, the academic curriculum included Bible reading and interpretation. When it came to clerical education, great emphasis was put on lectio, or the reading of Scripture with commentary, disputatio or the discussion of questions that might be raised on the biblical texts, and praedicatio or the preaching and applying of Scriptural truths. Such study was augmented by the four “senses” that hermeneutics inherited from the Patristic Period in searching for the deeper spiritual meanings hidden within the literal text. The four “senses” included the literal, which teaches historical events; the allegorical, which reveals a hidden meaning about the significance of Christ; the tropological, which reveals moral instructions; and the anagogical, which mainly pertains to the life to come.

The Influence of the Patristic Writings

Unlike most contemporary scholars, who follow the historical-critical method of study, the medieval writers are known for their reliance upon the tradition of the Church Fathers, in particular with the epistle of Romans. The early medieval exegesis of Paul from the eighth through tenth centuries was done mostly by monks who typically collected, rearranged and made elaborate editorial comments on the patristic commentators. Moving forward to the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, we can observe the continuing influence of

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143 Ibid., 4.
144 Ibid., 2.
145 Ibid.
the Church Fathers in the writings of William of St. Thierry, Peter Abelard and Thomas Aquinas. These three provide us with the most extensive and noteworthy expositions on Romans from medieval times.\footnote{Nicholas of Lyra also wrote a commentary on Romans. However, his commentary is not well known in the long tradition of Romans commentaries, perhaps because his work generally is not original. Rather, he “compiled and redacted the commentaries of earlier authorities and gave them his own flavor . . . The primary source of Chapters 9-11, 13, 15 and 16 . . . seems to be the \textit{Summa theologiae} of Thomas Aquinas.” See Levy, eds., \textit{The Bible in Medieval Tradition: The Letter to the Romans} (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2013), 51.}

William of St. Thierry introduces his \textit{Exposition on the Epistle to the Romans} in the following way:

\begin{quote}
The resulting commentary should be much more acceptable to the readers since it is not founded on novelty or vain presumption but it is recommended by the profound authority of outstanding teachers such as blessed Augustine, as I have said, and also Ambrose, Origen, and some other learned men, even some masters of our own day, who, we are certain, have not in any way transgressed the limits set by our Fathers.\footnote{William of St. Thierry, \textit{Exposition on the Epistle to the Romans}, trans. John Baptist Hasbrouck, ed. John D. Anderson (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, Inc., 1980), 15.}
\end{quote}

Though Augustine, Origen and Ambrose are named in his preface, he has actually cited 14 other patristic writers as well, including Basil, Cassian, Gregory the Great, and even Cicero.\footnote{Ibid., 290.} Cartwright calculates that about one-fourth of William’s exposition consists of quotations from the patristic and classical authors.\footnote{Cartwright, “Twelfth-Century Pauline Exegetis,” in \textit{A Companion to St. Paul in the Middle Ages}, 217.} Peter Abelard also quotes from Augustine, Origen,\footnote{\textquoteleft\textquoteleft Origen’s CRm is woven into the fabric of Peter Abelard’s Commentary on Romans\textquoteright\textquoteright (Thomas P. Scheck, “Origen’s Interpretation of Romans,” in \textit{Companion to St. Paul in the Middle Ages}, 22).} Gregory the Great, Jerome, Bede, Florus of Lyons, Rhaban Maur, Pelagius (under the name Jerome), Ambrosiaster, and Haimo of Auxerre.\footnote{Jean Doutre, “Romans as Read in School and Cloister in the Twelfth Century,” in \textit{Medieval Readings of Romans}, 33 and Cartwright, “Introduction,” in Abelard, \textit{Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans}, trans. Steven R. Cartwright (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2011), 24.} Unlike William of St. Thierry, Abelard does not let the Church Fathers dominate his commentary.\footnote{Ibid., note 78, “I calculate that approximately fifteen percent of Abelard’s Romans commentary consists of patristic quotations.”}
Nevertheless, Abelard still cites, and at times quotes extensively from, 19 different patristic writers including Augustine (48 times), Origen (28 times), Ambrosiaster (19 times), Isidore of Seville (6 times), Haimo of Auxerre (23 times), Jerome (21 times), Chrysostom (2 times), Theodore (3 times), and even Pelagius (11 times).\textsuperscript{154} While William of St. Thierry quotes Augustine more often than any other, Abelard uses Origen’s text more than that of any of the other patristic writers.\textsuperscript{155}

Thomas Aquinas is also known to have read widely from the original works of the Church Fathers available to him.\textsuperscript{156} From Aquinas’ commentary on Romans alone, we can see that the influence of the Augustinian writings on him far exceeds those of the other Church Fathers. Some of his favorite references besides Augustine (which he cites no less than 40 times) are Chrysostom (8 times), the Gloss by Lombard (14 times), Ambrose (4 times) and Jerome (4 times). Aquinas also cites Hilary, Gregory the Great, Athanasius, Bede, St. John Damascene and Pope Gelasius I.\textsuperscript{157} Though he cites Origen 5 times (4 times in Romans 9 and once in Romans 11), all citations express disagreement with the views that Origen has taken in those particular chapters. This is interesting, since Origen’s Pauline exegesis received its most favorable reception in the Middle Ages.\textsuperscript{158} Why would Aquinas not allude to him favorably in any interpretations of Romans, as he does with the writings of Ambrose, Augustine, Chrysostom or Jerome? The reason for Aquinas’ disagreement with

\textsuperscript{154} Abelard, \textit{Romans}, 426-28.

\textsuperscript{155} Although Abelard cites Augustine more times than Origen, Cartwright rightly asserts that “Abelard uses Origen more than any other, with regard to the amount of text quoted” (Cartwright, “Introduction,” in Abelard, \textit{Romans}, 24).


\textsuperscript{157} This is based on my cursory reading of Aquinas, \textit{Commentary on the letter of Saint Paul to the Romans}, trans. F. R. Larcher, ed. J. Mortensen and E. Alarcón (Lander, WY: Aquinas Institute for the Study of Sacred Doctrine, 2012).

Origen’s positions may likely be due to his distancing himself from the school of allegorizing exegesis.¹⁵⁹

Thus, the major surviving commentaries by Matthew of St. Thierry, Peter Abelard and Thomas Aquinas provide us with a cross-sectional glimpse of the unique strengths in the hermeneutical emphases of the medieval period. In analyzing their commentaries on Romans, I will concentrate primarily on their method and theological themes.

**The Romans Commentary of William of St. Thierry**

The early medieval commentaries on Paul’s epistles survive in fragments. They were written by monks and scholars in the developing cathedral schools, and of the small number of those that survive, most are now incomplete and of questionable authorship.¹⁶⁰ However, the twelfth-century exegesis of William of St. Thierry and the scholarship of Peter Abelard constituted a major turning point in medieval exegesis and theology, and they laid the foundation for thirteenth-century scholastics such as Thomas Aquinas.¹⁶¹

The Romans commentary of William of St. Thierry reflects the ancient Augustinian emphasis on rhetoric as the primary means of expounding Scripture.¹⁶² Though the approach of his exposition is devotional, he spends no less time on the Greek text than the Vulgate version. In fact, he considers the Greek text a superior reading.¹⁶³ In his preface, he acknowledges that he draws widely from the works of Augustine and Origen, as well as some unnamed masters of his time.¹⁶⁴ Throughout his exposition, he primarily quotes Augustine

¹⁵⁹ O’Connor, “St. Thomas’s Commentary on Romans,” 331.
¹⁶² Ibid.
¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 15.
(68 times) and Origen (48 times), while Ambrose is merely mentioned in the preface.

Following the method of Origen, William’s exposition shows a total reliance on passages from both Old and New Testaments in explicating the epistle of Paul, and he uses them as the authoritative basis for his exegesis. William cites over 200 Old Testament passages, with nearly half from Psalms alone; and he cites nearly 400 New Testament passages with 130 from Romans as well.165

William of St. Thierry is considered an Augustinian, not only because of his extensive Augustinian references167 but also because of the fact that the centrality of grace in the spiritual life is fundamental to his exegesis.168 In fact, throughout the preface to his exposition, William extols the grace of God repeatedly.169 “For William, grace is not just part of God’s objective means of saving humanity; it is an experience.”170 The experience of grace is best exemplified in his personal prayers, by means of which he expounds the passage at hand, leading his hearers in their ascent to God (i.e. Preface; 1:1; 5:2-3, 5-6; 7:14-15, 24-25; and 8:3-4).

The primacy of grace is the main focus of William’s exposition, which he points out in the preface of his commentary: “The joy of contemplating the grace of God and the glory of God, which must be preached to all, have brought me to this task.”171 Consequently, much

165 Anderson counts 201 OT references and 388 NT references. See his tabulation of Scriptural citations in William of St. Thierry, Romans, 285.
166 Ibid., 279-81.
167 Ibid., 290.
168 Anderson, “Introduction,” in William of St. Thierry, Romans, 3. William of St. Thierry draws much of his theology of grace from Augustine. For example, he writes of different kinds of grace also described by Augustine: praeventiens or “anticipated by grace” (Preface, 17), adjuvans or “the help of grace” (1:32, 43), operans or, as William says, “the same grace works” (1:4, 21) and sanans, “to be healed to grace” (3:21-22, 69) (cf. Cartwright, “Twelfth-Century Pauline Exegesis,” 219).
169 He does so no fewer than 22 times in the 3 pages of his preface to the Exposition on the Epistle to the Romans, 15-17.
171 William of St. Thierry, Romans, 16.
of his discussion on many doctrinal issues, such as Christ, repentance, justification, baptism, merit, charity, election, predestination, Holy Spirit, Trinity, and sanctification, all inevitably point to or are covered under the theme of grace. Though William of St. Thierry is much influenced by Augustine’s doctrine on grace, William

172 Christ’s fullness of grace overflows from Him into us: “Therefore, the Only-begotten came from the Father, full of grace and truth, so full of grace that it not only abounded in him, but overflowed from him into us, and from his fullness we have all received grace for grace” (8:3-4, 152).

173 The grace of remorse and repentance: “Penitence for sin is properly the work of grace” (6:3-4, 115).

174 We are justified by grace so that we may obey the law written in our heart, which we cannot do before: “The Apostle’s statement that only the doer of the law shall be justified before God requires a correct understanding, lest it seem contrary to what he said elsewhere . . . Heaven forbid that justice should come to one who keeps the law and from the works of the law; rather, justice comes that he may keep the law. He is justified by grace in the act of keeping the law . . . the Apostle here speaks to Jews who have been converted to the Lord and who fulfill the law in a spiritual way. The Gentile convert carries out the prescriptions of the law naturally, and by doing that he is justified, because the spirit of grace restores in him the natural law that was written naturally in his heart by God, but deleted by vice” (2:13, 55). Furthermore, he writes of grace as the manifestation of justification (3:19-20, 68) and “justice itself is grace” (6:23, 126). Cf. also 3:28, 74.

175 The grace of baptism: “The great sacrament of baptism which is celebrated in us consists in this: that those who attain to this grace die to sin, just as he is said to have been dead to sin because he was dead to the flesh, which is the likeness of sin, and they live, no matter what their age, by being born again from the washing, just as he lives by rising again from the tomb” (6:3-4, 113).

176 William asserts that we only merit by grace and grace received: “if we merit anything, it is a grace, and what we merit is grace for grace. Indeed, to bear the fruit of a grace received is an increase of grace, just as to have received grace in the first place is a grace” (Preface, 16). Elsewhere he says, “nothing of human merit precedes the grace of God, but by merit grace merits to be increased so that it even merits to be perfected” (3:27, 72).

177 He exhorts his readers to delight in the grace that infuses the spirit of charity (7:14-15, 138-39). William further repeats the Scriptural claim that the Holy Spirit, who is the author of grace, pours forth charity into our heart and bears witness to our spirit that we are children of God, and inspires us to love God in return (8:16, 163).

178 He speaks of an election according to the law of grace and merit of God’s righteousness: “What does the phrase mean, ‘according to the election of grace’? We were evil, and we were chosen to be good through the grace of the one choosing us. For grace did not find merit, but made merit . . . Israel pursued the law of works, and seeking justice in it, did not obtain it; but the elect both the Jews and the Gentiles obtained it in the law of grace, in the law of faith, in the law of the spirit of life” (11:2-7, 209).

179 William addresses predestination first as Christ being predestined to be our light of grace: “The Saviour appeared to men as an outstanding light of predestination and grace” (1:4, 21 — cf. Augustine, Predestination of the Saints, 30 [XV]); “God predestined Christ before the ages” (3:24-25, 70). Second, the effect of predestination is grace: “So God’s predestination for good is a preparation, as I said, and grace is the effect of that same predestination” (8:29-30, 176 — cf. Augustine, Predestination of the Saints, 19 [X]).


181 The grace of the Trinity: “He [the Trinity] is the principle to whom we return, the form which we follow, the grace by which we are reconciled. He is the one Creator by which we were created, the likeness by which we are reformed to unity, and the peace by which we cling to unity. This is the only thing which we should enjoy, the Holy Trinity . . . .” (11:33-36, 225-26 — cf. Augustine, “On True Religion,” in Augustine: Earlier Writings, Burleigh, 55, 113).

182 William explains that the Gentiles are sanctified with grace in and from the Holy Spirit (15:15-17, 260).
expands his teaching on grace and assigns a much greater role to grace on the majority of the doctrinal subjects mentioned above in his reading of Romans. Cartwright explains:

William places greater emphasis on the direct, ecstatic experience of God than Augustine does, and he addresses more themes than Augustine does in discussing it, and consequently says more about the relationship between experience and grace.\(^{183}\)

For this reason, we will recognize that William’s understanding of election and predestination is much broader than that of Augustine’s.

**Abelard’s Progressive Reading of Romans**

Peter Abelard writes his commentary on Romans in the mid-1130s. His volume is considered to be another significant contribution of medieval scholarship on the epistle of Romans. Similar to William of St. Thierry, Abelard emphasizes grace as the main theological theme of this epistle. In his prologue, he writes:

*The purpose of the present Epistle . . . is to call the Romans back to true humility and fraternal peace, who, converted from among the Jews and Gentiles, were placing themselves in front of each other with snobbish contention. It achieves that in two ways, by amplifying the gifts of divine grace and by diminishing the merits of our own works, so that no one may presume to boast about his works, but one should attribute everything to divine grace, whatever he is able to do, by which grace he may recognize that he has received whatever good he has. Therefore, the whole of all the subject matter consists in these two things: both our own works and divine grace.*\(^{184}\)

Abelard is as Augustinian as William of St. Thierry in holding the view of grace as key to the complete redemptive process and the whole salvation content provided by God for humanity. Likewise, Abelard relates grace to most of the key doctrinal themes in Romans: adoption,\(^{185}\)


\(^{184}\) Abelard, *Romans*, 87-88.

\(^{185}\) We are adopted as children of God only through grace: “This entire adoption may be attributed to divine grace, not to our merits” (8:22-23). We “were adopted by God through grace as sons and are especially shown to be loved by him by the exhibition of countless benefits” (9:3).
Christ, the elect and the reprobate, predestination, knowledge of God, justification, sin, forgiveness, baptism, virtues, sanctification, and glorification. Similarly to Augustine, Abelard describes grace as praeveniens, adjuvans, and operans in his commentary as well.

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186 The grace of God is Christ and it is the gift bestowed and the charity exercised by Christ (1:8; 3:26; 4:25; 5:9, 11, 15, 16, 18; 6:11; 14:23; 16:20).
187 Attained through faith: “the Gentiles attain the grace of God through faith” (3:29).
188 In fact, Abelard maintains that grace is imparted to both the elect and reprobate: “But he equally imparts this grace both to the reprobate and to the elect, by instructing each one equally about this, so that by the same grace of faith which they obtained, one is aroused to good works, and the other is rendered inexcusable through the negligence of his sluggishness” (9:21).
189 Abelard follows Augustine in defining predestination as “preparation of divine grace” (Augustine, Predestination of the Saints, 10.19) 1:4; 8:29.
190 He identifies the human knowledge of God’s eternal power and divine nature as a gift of His grace, which can be known through His creation: “They did not glorify him as God; that is, they did not show the veneration of reverence owed to him through humility, neither did they give him thanks, that is, recognize from the gift of his grace this knowledge which they had about him, and which they had before the others (and they praise him on account of this). But they perished in their own thoughts, namely, in the manner of smoke, which rises higher the more it fails and is annihilated. For thus the more they swelled up by arrogance on account of the knowledge that they gained, ascribing it to their zeal or talent, not to divine grace, the more they desired to be made blind and sink down into error even more” (1:21).
191 One is only justified freely by His grace, not by one’s preceding merits (3:24).
192 It is God’s abundant and super-abounding grace that we are set free from sin and its consequences: “For it ought to be enough for us, in consequence of the abundance of divine grace, if perhaps we should escape the most grave and eternal death which we incur in both ways (temporally and eternally) through that sin” (5:19 cf. 5:21).
193 The grace of God is the free gift of forgiveness (5:16).
194 While William of St. Thierry teaches that the sacrament of baptism is the grace that must lead to moral uprightness, Abelard identifies the grace of baptism only as “the likeness of the death of Christ” (6:5).
195 Further, Abelard writes that God’s grace confers and multiplies virtues in our life: “He says that sin abounded and that grace super-abounded, which not only removed sin, but also conferred and multiplied the virtues, both visibly in miracles and spiritually in the interior goods of the soul” (5:21).
196 Abelard alludes to divine grace in leading one to sanctification when sins have been forgiven (4:7).
197 Abelard speaks of the grace that glorifies our soul and body in the future resurrection: “I said that our body is dead; that is, it remains subject to temporal death even after the forgiveness of all sins. But it itself shall be freed from this mortality in the resurrection, so that divine grace may glorify not only the soul but also the body” (8:11).
198 He describes “prevenient grace” as the basis of God’s calling, rather than one’s merits (1:7); he also regards it as the foundation of forgiveness (4:7) and of the stirring up of our desire for God and His kingdom as well as for good works (9:21). Abelard also associates “prevenient grace” = “internal inspiration” (1:7) with “prevenient mercy” = “internal inspiration” (9:15).
199 Abelard speaks of “adjuvans grace” not in salvation but rather in the sanctification of the believer, that is, the grace that helps the believer to persevere: “We conquer all these things by persevering through the grace of God rather than by our own power. And this is what he says: on account of him who loved us, that is, on account of his helping grace” (8:37).
200 Abelard equates the Holy Spirit not just with grace but also with the operation of the divine grace (5:5).
The Holy Spirit is also equated with grace in Abelard’s Romans commentary. As the gift of God, the Holy Spirit is the grace of the Father and the Son, from both of whom He proceeds (1:7, 20; cf. 8:4, 10, 27; 15:19). Abelard also addresses the Holy Spirit as “the gift of divine grace” (1:4; 3:13; 4:23-24; 5:5; 8:13) and as “Spirit seven-form—the sevenfold Spirit of God or the gifts of sevenfold grace—the seven gifts of divine grace” (1:7, 20; cf. Isa. 11:2-3).

When Abelard writes about grace, his rhetoric takes the form of fundamental statements and doctrinal explanation with moral emphasis, as contrasted with William of St. Thierry who shows more profundity as he ties God’s grace to the ascent of the human soul, and the experience of communion (5:5-6) and blessed union with God (5:7-11). On the other hand, Abelard describes the love of God as His grace expressed: “The love of God toward us is that disposition of divine grace for our salvation” (13:10). Furthermore, God’s love in us demands moral responsibilities towards our neighbors (2:26; 7:6; 13:8-10). Particularly in 7:6, Abelard compares the commandments to love God and neighbor and maintains that according to our Lord’s teaching in Luke 10:29-37, the commandment to love our neighbor includes all people, even our enemies.

The Lord himself diligently considered this when the rich man, being questioned, recited the commandments of the law to him and said, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself,” and openly taught that “neighbor” be used instead of friend or benefactor on account of the added parable, showing by this discernment regarding the rich man that he only who applied mercy to him who had fallen among thieves was his neighbor. And through this it is clear, since the love of neighbor is applied to a friend only according to the letter of the law, that by no means is the command of love which is in the law perfect, as is that command of the Gospel in which we are commanded to love our enemies and to do good to them also, so that we may be perfect just as the heavenly Father is, “who makes his sun to rise on the good and the evil.”201

201 Abelard, Romans, 244-45.
Cartwright is right when he points outs that Abelard’s theology of grace and love “is also an ethical theology, not only in its moral demands on humans, but as well in its assessment of God himself and how God acts towards humanity. This is one of the distinguishing features of Abelard’s commentary and of the new theology.”

Abelard’s approach to expounding Romans is one where he applies traditional exegetical methods, progressive dialectics and probing questions as the means of expounding the passage. Being influenced by the patristic writers from whom the medieval scholars had read extensively, Abelard is keen to adopt the patristic and even early medieval traditions both in doctrinal content and scriptural references. Besides his ample citations from classical and patristic literatures, another of his exegetical approaches that is similar to the patristic approach is to substantiate his interpretation of a passage by reference to both the Old and New Testaments. He quotes Scripture to comment on Scripture in order to clarify and develop his explanation. Abelard includes around 275 scriptural citations from the Old Testament and over 525 citations from the New Testament.

Abelard’s volume is considered to be a more progressive reading of Romans in this period. He uses an advanced method of dialectics as a means for discussing diverse opinions involving theological issues. Cartwright elaborates:

Having written the book on dialectic, he applies it to the text of Romans, both to clarify the meaning of the text through the use of distinctions, definitions, analogies, and syllogisms, and to demonstrate the truth or falseness of propositions. It is in the latter case that he uses the Quaestio, the short treatises on various topics found throughout the work.

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203 Abelard, Romans, 420-25.
204 Cartwright, “Introduction,” in Abelard, Romans, 15.
Abelard applies his dialectics to the form of the *quaestio*, so as to discern true interpretations from false ones and to clarify the apostle’s words and meaning. The most prominent question, and certainly the most commonly analyzed, concerns justification and redemption through the death of Christ.  

Abelard highlights God’s “matchless grace” and His “supreme love” for us through the “Passion of Christ.”  

Nevertheless it seems to us in this that we are justified in the blood of Christ and reconciled to God, because it was through this matchless grace shown to us . . . Therefore our redemption is that supreme love in us through the Passion of Christ which not only frees us from slavery to sin, but gains for us the true liberty of the sons of God, so that we may complete all things by his love rather than by fear.  

Another substantial use of dialectics is found in 5:19, where Abelard discusses free choice within the context of original sin. His in-depth arguments regarding free choice reveal how his hermeneutical emphases determined his reading of Romans 9 and his understanding of predestination in Romans 8. 

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*Thomas Aquinas’ Approach to Romans*

Interestingly, Aquinas also thinks that the theme of grace—Christ’s grace in itself (1:8, §§74, 76)—is distinctively set out in the epistle to the Romans. In fact, he believes that the entire teaching of the fourteen epistles of Paul, including Hebrews, is about the grace of Christ as it pertains to the Church. 

For this entire teaching is about Christ's grace, which can be considered in three ways: In one way, as it is in the Head [source of grace], namely, Christ, and in this regard it is explained in the letter to the Hebrews. In another way, as it is found [the economies] in the chief members of the Mystical Body, and this is explained in the letters to the prelates. In a third way, as it is

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207 Abelard, *Romans*, 167-68; the section begins at 3:26.  
208 Cf. pages 75-76.  
209 William of St. Thierry dwells more on the experiential side of grace. Abelard emphasizes more the ethical side, while Aquinas expounds more on the ecclesiastical side of grace.
found in the Mystical Body itself, that is, the Church, and this is explained in the letters sent to the gentiles. These last letters are distinguished from one another according to the three ways the grace of Christ can be considered: in one way, as it [Christ’s grace] is in itself, and thus it is set out in the letter to the Romans.\textsuperscript{210}

While Aquinas had developed a detailed analysis of grace in his \textit{Summa Theologica}, question 109—The Necessity of Grace—the theological import of the theme of grace is likewise evident throughout Aquinas’ exegesis of Romans.\textsuperscript{211} For example, he relates the grace of adoption and justification to the grace of sanctification and sacrament (1:4, §46; 1:5, §61, 1:7, §§69-70; 1:16, §99).\textsuperscript{212} He exhorts the believers in Rome to carry out the works of the gospel of grace (1:16, §97), which is the gospel of Christ and His grace (1:2-6). He speaks of the “life of grace” as guidance and instruction on the path to eternal life itself (1:17, §104).\textsuperscript{213} This grace is provided through faith in the Son of God, Christ, which leads to eternal life (1:16, §99). Further along, Aquinas identifies the power of grace (5:2, §§381, 383) as Christ’s grace in removing our sins and bestowing blessings (5:15, §§430-33) and Christ’s grace that frees us from the corruption of the body (7:24-25, §§592-94).

Aquinas’ reading of Romans is also guided by the tradition of interpretation at the heart of the Church, in particular by the teaching of the Councils—Nicaea, Constantinople, Ephesus, and Chalcedon.\textsuperscript{214} As with these early writers and even more so than with his medieval contemporaries, Aquinas shows his mastery of Scripture itself as he is able to

\textsuperscript{210} Aquinas, “Prologue 11,” \textit{Commentary on the letter of Saint Paul to the Romans}, 4-5. Parenthetical explanation added.
\textsuperscript{211} I disagree with O’Connor, who thinks that Aquinas steers clear of the detailed analysis of grace in his exegesis of Romans (cf. Donal O’Connor, “St. Thomas’s Commentary on Romans,” \textit{Irish Theological Quarterly} 34, no. 4 (1967): 339).
\textsuperscript{212} Cf. also 3:24, §306.
unreservedly cross-reference scriptural texts throughout his commentary, especially with
citations from the Old Testament,\textsuperscript{215} in order to expound and substantiate his interpretations
of Romans.

In his actual exegesis, Aquinas is well acquainted with the four senses\textsuperscript{216} of the
patristic exegetical approach. However, he stresses that the primary function of the literal
and historical sense is to discover the meaning intended by the author, indicated through the
words of Scripture. Furthermore, there is a type of signification by which words signify
things that can in turn signify further spiritual realities; it is called the spiritual sense, and it is
built upon the literal sense and presupposes it.\textsuperscript{217} For Aquinas, to know the literal sense is to
know the original message intended by the sacred author (both God and the writer) and the
meaning signified by those words. Therefore, Aquinas asserts that the most fundamental
duty in biblical interpretation is to identify the literal sense: “Holy Scripture sets up no
confusion, since all meanings are based on one, namely, the literal sense.”\textsuperscript{218} In other words,
the spiritual sense can only be gathered from a sound knowledge of the literal sense.\textsuperscript{219}
Accordingly, Aquinas’s foremost desire is to look for the meanings intended by both the
divine and individual authors. In such a process, the most prominent feature of his practice is
to abide by a consistent dialectical format that ponders and analyzes each phrase and each
sentence of the passage in a rational sequence. This dialectical procedure enables Aquinas to

\textsuperscript{215} A cursory reading of Aquinas’ commentary on Romans reveals that he cites no fewer than 800 OT passages and nearly 1200 from the NT. By far, he uses the most scriptural references of any commentator on Romans in the medieval period, thereby demonstrating his masterful knowledge of the whole Scripture.

\textsuperscript{216} “The historical or literal sense, the allegorical sense, the tropological or moral sense, and the anagogical sense” (ST, I, 1, 10). Cf. Origen’s “Scheme of Interpretation” in Lewis, The Philocalia of Origen, 1. See also Augustine’s four senses: “the way of history, the way of allegory, the way of analogy, and the way of aetiology” (Augustine, Unfinished Literal Commentary on Genesis, trans. E. Hill [Brooklyn, NY: New City press, 2002], 2.5).

\textsuperscript{217} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{218} Ibid., ad 1.

\textsuperscript{219} Lamb, “Introduction,” Aquinas, Ephesians, 23.
outline the main thrust of the passage, carefully considering each option\textsuperscript{220} and then logically relating each sub-point to the central point of the reading.

One noteworthy feature of Aquinas’s theology within his exegetical horizon is his view of faith. He understands faith as the first act of the justice of God, which works in one who believes according to the purpose of the grace of God (4:5, §331). However, faith does not replace the involvement of the human mind or the operation of human responsibility. In his explanation of Rom. 8:28-32, Aquinas states:

\begin{quote}
We consider the recipients of this benefit and see something on God’s part and on man’s part. He indicates what is involved on man’s part when he says, to those who love God. For the love of God is in us through the indwelling spirit. But it is the Holy Spirit who directs us in the right path: set me, \textit{O Lord, a law in your way, and guide me in the right path} (Ps. 27:11); hence it says in 1Peter: \textit{who is there to harm you, if you are zealous for what is right?} (1 Pet. 3:13); \textit{great peace have they who love your law; nothing can make them stumble} (Ps. 119:165). And this is reasonably so, because, as it says in Proverbs: \textit{I love those who love me} (Prov. 8:17). To love is to will good to the beloved; but for God to will is to accomplish, for \textit{whatever the Lord wills he does} (Ps. 135:6). Therefore, God turns all things to the good of those who love him.\textsuperscript{221}
\end{quote}

Raith promptly observes, “We see how Aquinas is seeking to uphold the Augustinian principle that God does not justify us without us. In our justification, God incorporates the movement of the intellect and the will as a participation in God’s work of justification.”\textsuperscript{222}

Despite the fact that Aquinas includes both “man’s part” and “God’s part” in His calling, these parts are asymmetrical because the human will is under the influence of the Spirit of God. For Aquinas, faith is not simply the gift by which we lay hold of Christ and receive His

\textsuperscript{220} An example of this can been seen in his explanation of the phrase “by nature” in 2:14, §§215-17.
\textsuperscript{221} Aquinas, \textit{Romans}, §699, 233.
\textsuperscript{222} Raith II, \textit{Aquinas and Calvin on Romans}, 48.
justification as a “covering,” as John Calvin later proposes.223 Rather, here in Romans, Aquinas sees faith itself also as one’s active participation in the act of loving and obeying God.224

**Predestination in the Medieval Reading of Romans 9**

Based on the extensive and noteworthy commentaries on Romans produced in this period, the different readings of Romans reveal a common feature—the central theme of grace as an interpretive emphasis in such authors as William of St. Thierry, Peter Abelard, and Thomas Aquinas. The reason for which these medieval commentators accentuate the theme of grace is most likely found in the influence of Augustine, who expounded the theology of grace in many of his doctrinal writings. Hence, the focus on grace sheds light on why these medieval authorities explain predestination in Romans 9 with the following premises: a) election and predestination are based on the love and goodness of God, b) predestination is ordained through the providence of God, and c) free will and foreknowledge are compatible in the predestination of God. In this section we will look again at William of St. Thierry, Abelard, and Aquinas, to understand their views on predestination; and we will also analyze Nicholas of Lyra, based on the few chapters we have from his commentary on Romans, because he also offers an interpretation of predestination and foreknowledge that reflects the theological perspective of this period.

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223 “On the contrary, a man will be justified by faith when, excluded from the righteousness of works, he by faith lays hold of the righteousness of Christ, and clothed in it appears in the sight of God not as a sinner, but as righteous” (Inst., III.11.2).

224 Aquinas believes, “Free will is inadequate for the act of faith since the contents of faith are above human reason” (Aquinas, Ephesians, 2:8). He also describes the act of faith as a cognitive assent to what God has revealed to man (ST II-II, 1, A1). Aquinas further explains faith as what happens when “the intellect assents to something, not through being sufficiently moved to this assent by its proper object, but through an act of choice, whereby it turns voluntarily to one side rather than to the other: and if this be accompanied by doubt or fear of the opposite side, there will be opinion, while, if there be certainty and no fear of the other side, there will be faith” (ST II-II, 1, A4).
Election and Predestination Based on the Love and Goodness of God

From the illustrious writings of Augustine onward, a key issue in the predestination debate has been the basis and nature of God’s predestination. As the medieval theologians worked out their biblical understanding and theological solution to the problem of election and reprobation, they developed a framework of predestination that was rooted in the love and goodness of God.

William of St. Thierry alludes to this presupposition in his commentary on Rom. 9:22-24: “Let one who has been liberated learn from one not liberated what was just for him also, had grace not helped him. For unless the debtor is hung, someone whose debt has been forgiven is less grateful.”\(^{225}\) In his discussion of the topic of predestination—which includes election and reprobation, vessels of mercy and wrath, honor and dishonor—William touches on the theme of grace that was demonstrated through the One who was hung on the cross, depicting how the love and grace of God freely flow. That is why he quotes Rom. 5:5, about the charity of God poured forth in the hearts of “not my people” and “the remnant of Israel,” when explicating the prophecies of Hosea and Isaiah cited by Paul in verses 25 to 27.\(^{226}\) In awe, William exclaims, “Let there be justice, but let it be from grace.”\(^{227}\)

Thomas Aquinas emphasizes in his *Summa Theologica* that predestination is primarily the understanding of the One who predestines and not anything in the predestined. “Whence it is clear that predestination is a kind of type of the ordering of some persons towards eternal salvation, existing in the divine mind. The execution, however, of this order is in a passive way in the predestined, but actively in God.”\(^{228}\) Aquinas illustrates how

\(^{226}\) Ibid., 195-96.
\(^{227}\) Ibid., 199.
\(^{228}\) ST, I, 23, 2.
humankind is led toward God by predestination: “Now if a thing cannot attain to something by the power of its nature, it must be directed thereto by another; thus, an arrow is directed by the archer towards a mark. Hence, properly speaking, a rational creature, capable of eternal life, is led towards it, directed, as it were, by God.”

While the starting point for the Reformers is the immutability and the sovereignty of God, the starting point for Aquinas is the love of God. Garrigou calls it the principle of predilection, which states: “One would not be better than another unless one were loved more by God.” For Aquinas, divine love is the causal element of good. Love has to do with willing good with respect to another. Aquinas explains that the predestined are elected and loved by God in the following way:

Predestination presupposes election, and this latter presupposes love . . . Election and love, however, are differently ordered in God, and in ourselves: because in us the will in loving does not cause good, but we are incited to love by the good which already exists; and therefore we choose someone to love, and so election in us precedes love. In God, however, it is the reverse. For His will, by which in loving He wishes good to someone, is the cause of that good possessed by some in preference to others. Thus it is clear that love precedes election in the order of reason, and election precedes predestination.

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229 Ibid., I, 23, 1.
230 Garrigou-Lagrange, Predestination, 78. The principle of predilection states that predestination arises from the infinite depths of God’s love and the free volition of His goodness. Aquinas remarks, “The reason for the predestination of some, and reprobation of others, must be sought for in the goodness of God” (ST, I, 23, 5, ad 3).
231 ST I, 20, 2: “Nothing prevents one and the same thing being loved under one aspect, while it is hated under another. God loves sinners in so far as they are existing natures; for they have existence, and have it from Him. In so far as they are sinners, they have not existence at all, but fall short of it; and this in them is not from God. Hence under this aspect, they are hated by Him.” Ibid., 3: “Since to love a thing is to will it good, in a twofold way anything may be loved more, or less. In one way on the part of the act of the will itself, which is more or less intense. In this way God does not love some things more than others, because He loves all things by an act of the will that is one, simple, and always the same. In another way on the part of the good itself that a person wills for the beloved. In this way we are said to love that one more than another, for whom we will a greater good, though our will is not more intense. In this way we must needs say that God loves some things more than others. For since God’s love is the cause of goodness in things, as has been said (A. 2), no one thing would be better than another, if God did not will greater good for one than for another.” Ibid., 4: “God’s will is the cause of goodness in things; and the reason why some things are better than others, is that God wills for them a greater good. Hence it follows that He loves more the better things.” Cf. Ex 33:19; Rom. 9:14ff; I Cor. 4:7.
232 ST, I, 23, 4.
In his commentary on Romans, Aquinas is just as clear on this basis of God’s predestination as he is in his *Summa*. In the exposition of God’s predestination in Rom. 9:6-13, Aquinas reiterates love and goodness as God’s reason and motivation behind His determination. For it is called God’s love, inasmuch as he wills good to a person absolutely; it is election, inasmuch as through the good he wills for a person, he prefers him to someone else. But it is called predestination, inasmuch as he directs a person to the good he wills for him by loving and choosing him . . . But God’s love is the cause of every good found in a creature; consequently, the good in virtue of which one is preferred to another through election follows upon God’s willing it—which pertains to his love. Consequently, it is not in virtue of some good which he selects in a man that God loves him; rather, it is because he loved him that he prefers him to someone by election.233

Aquinas claims that God’s love precedes His election (Deut. 7:7, 8), which is contrary to human choice and love. Human choice precedes love because human choice is on account of the good perceived in the object, and this good becomes the reason for one’s preferential choice to love.234 This is why Paul concludes Romans 8 with a declaration extolling the love of God: “For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 8:39).

Nicholas of Lyra understands predestination as the eternal ordaining of God, firstly through Jesus Christ, for the carrying out of His plan by His grace in the present and for glory in the future. Jesus can be said to be predestined as the Son of God in terms of how His divinity and human nature are united with power and strength in the history of His incarnation (Rom. 1:3-4). This sets the tone for Nicholas’ approach to understanding divine

234 Ibid.
goodness and kindness as the basis of God’s eternal predestination. In his commentary on Rom. 9:13, he stipulates:

Moreover, willing rightly and ordinately in this way belongs to God, who is unable to choose something except rightly or ordinately, and who in no way wills an end on account of those things that lead to an end; on the contrary. Thus merits, as foreknown by God, or the foreknowledge of merits cannot be the cause of predestination but proceed only from the divine kindness [emphasis added] by which someone is chosen for glory. Because of this, God provides grace through which one is able to merit.\(^\text{235}\)

Nicholas pursues this premise further in Rom. 9:16: “It is wholly by goodness that God elects to glory eternally and gives grace to the elect temporally.”\(^\text{236}\) Accordingly, the doctrine of predestination for the medieval theologians originates from the love and goodness of the eternal God, who in His freedom chose to love the world of humanity in spite of its sins and corruption. Hence we see how the fullness of the grace and mercy of God for sinful humanity, as demonstrated through the Cross of Jesus the Son and carried out in the history of salvation, becomes the central theme for the medieval theologians in their reading of Romans 9.

**Predestination Ordained through the Providence of God**

The second notable premise in the medieval concept of predestination in the reading of Romans concerns the process of carrying out God’s overall plan of salvation, called providence. The premise concerning providence states that God in His divine government directs His ordained plan through the natural order of the universe and special relations of each created being. By doing so, He attains His wise purpose and loving care for the elect (Rom. 8:28).

\(^{235}\) Nicholas, “Romans 9,” *The Bible in Medieval Tradition*, 224.
\(^{236}\) Ibid., 225.
Augustine is one of the first theologians who alludes to the doctrine of divine providence in his *Confessions* and the *City of God*. His teaching is a prominent part of discussions about predestination in the Middle Ages, beginning with Peter Abelard and reaching full development with Aquinas in the *Summa Theologica*. Abelard, in his commentary on Romans 9:11, connects providence with divine predestination: “The purpose of God according to election might endure in one of them, that is, in Jacob, and not in Esau; this is according to what God had declared in himself and ordained in his providence from eternity, that the choice of Jacob should endure, that is, His predestination should remain unmoved.” In response to Paul’s doxology at the end of Romans 11, Abelard equates God’s providence with the unfathomable wonder of how God causes, directs and orders the dispensation as well as the accomplishment of His eternal purpose: “How incomprehensible, that is, how powerless we are to understand those causes of dispensation or of his providence, for what reason he decreed something was to be done before his works were done, and even after the accomplishment of his works, his ways are unsearchable.”

Thomas Aquinas classifies predestination as a part of providence, where providence is the ordering in love of God’s plan towards the end of one’s eternal salvation. He further explains that in the working out of His providence, God is the primary cause of the order of his foreordained plans, and He therefore has immediate providence over all things. However, to achieve the execution of this order, God employs secondary causes in the form of created things and events, including human affairs. Aquinas further divides secondary causes into

237 Aquinas also mentions Gregory of Nyssa (*ST*, I, 22, 3).
238 *Book 6*.
239 *Book 5*.
240 Abelard, Romans, 290.
241 Ibid., 329.
242 *ST*, I, 23, 4.
necessary causes (always bringing about the same effect, such as the natural laws of science) and contingent causes (not always bringing about the same effect, such as our actions being contingent upon our choice). Yet the effects of both necessary and contingent causes are certain and infallible insofar as both are still caused by God.243

For Aquinas, the certainty of providence finds scriptural expression in Romans 8:28. In his commentary, explains the line “that all things work together for the good for those who love God” in the following way:

To realize this we should consider that whatever happens in the world, even if it be evil, accrues to the good of the universe; because, as Augustine says in Enchiridion: God is so good that he would permit no evil, unless he were powerful enough to draw some good out of any evil . . . The same seems to apply to the relationship of the noblest parts to the other parts, because the evil affecting the other parts is ordained to the good of the noblest parts. But whatever happens to the noblest parts is ordained only to their good, because his care for them is for their sake, whereas his care for the others is for the sake of the noblest . . . But the most excellent parts of the universe are God’s saints . . . he takes care of them in such a way as to permit no evil to affect them without converting it to their good.244

In Romans 9, Aquinas further develops this theme of God’s providence in bestowing benefits on humanity for their salvation. Though the term providence is not used, the implications of God working through “natural things” and “movements and activities” involve a kind of certainty:

But every benefit God bestows on a man for his salvation is an effect of predestination. Furthermore, God’s benefits extend not only to the infusion of grace, by which a man is made righteous, but also to its use, just as in natural things God not only causes their forms but also all the movements.

243 ST, 22, 3-4; 23, 5; Joseph Peter Wawrykow, “Grace,” Theology of Thomas Aquinas, ed. Rik Van Nieuwenhove and Joseph Peter Wawrykow (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005), 202. Aquinas does not rule out the importance of prayer and other good works in helping the predestined to fulfill their salvation. However, he is not promoting work-based salvation, as some might have accused him of doing (perhaps Acts 10:4 might help us to understand his use of the word “fulfill”). Aquinas is careful to first defend the certainty of predestination; then he reminds us of the need for prayer and good works on the basis of the fact that providence (of which predestination is a part) does not do away with secondary causes (ST, I, 23, 8; II Pet. 1:10).

244 Aquinas, Romans, 8:28-32, §§696-97.
and activities of those forms, inasmuch as God is the source of all movement in such a way that when he ceases to act, no movement or activity proceeds from those forms. But sanctifying grace and the accompanying virtues in the soul are related to their use as a natural form is related to its activity. Hence, it is said: *O Lord, you have wrought for us all our works* (Isa 26:12).\textsuperscript{245}

In his explanation here, Aquinas utilizes the governing concept of divine providence as one of his hermeneutical solutions for the predestination text in Romans 9. Through this key concept, Aquinas argues that God’s predestination must not be viewed as despotic, fatalistic or fortuitous, due to the fact that in reality it is arranged according to divine providence.\textsuperscript{246} Essentially, this providence does not impose necessity upon contingent causes, nor does it hinder or eliminate the good works and prayers of human free will.\textsuperscript{247}

**Free Will and Foreknowledge in the Predestination of God**

Augustine’s writings strongly influenced medieval theological thoughts and writings. With the exception of Nicholas of Lyra, who was a Franciscan theologian, the rest of the commentators mentioned in this study were of an Augustinian persuasion. Most of their views on the doctrine of predestination, specifically on free will and foreknowledge, were derived wholly from the hermeneutical standpoint of God’s prevenient grace. Their disputations on these subjects lie somewhere between the Patristic defense of human free will and the Reformed tenets of God’s sovereignty and the bondage of the human will.

Peter Abelard resonates with Origen in his interpretation of foreknowledge as an intimate knowing of the way of the righteous (Ps. 1:6), contrary to the notion that God is ignorant of the wicked ones and their ways (Lk. 13:25, 27). This “foreknowing” precedes divine predestination. As Abelard says, “Therefore, whomever he thus foreknew, he later

\textsuperscript{245} Ibid., 9:14-18, §772.
\textsuperscript{246} Aquinas, *Ephesians*, 1:11-12, §32.
\textsuperscript{247} *ST*, I, 22, 4 and 23, 5 & 8.
predestined them; that is, he prepared them with the gifts of his grace. For divine predestination is called ‘the preparation of grace,’ which is only in the elect.”\(^{248}\)

Concerning free will, Abelard quotes Boethius to explain free choice as “nothing other than that faculty of the soul for deliberating and judging that which it wants to do, whether what it chooses should be done or should not be followed.”\(^{250}\) In his dialectical style, Abelard discusses the problem that arises from the consequences of divine foreknowledge and providence. Some might argue that one cannot avoid a particular sin if this sin is inevitable because of God’s sure knowledge. Therefore one should not be judged guilty of this sin when this person is no longer free in any way to avoid this sin.\(^{251}\)

Abelard approaches this question with two thoughts. First, he states that God’s knowledge is a foreknowledge of righteousness and an outflow of the abundance of His love, not just simply a foreknowledge of the necessary consequences. Abelard further asserts: “God does not allow by righteousness that which he nevertheless allows by a certain provision, or else he orders it to be done from the abundance of his charity rather than from the equity of righteousness.”\(^{252}\) Second, Abelard distinguishes between the antithetical concepts of “work” versus “sloth”, using them to advance his exposition of Romans 9:

So also, when God offers the Kingdom of Heaven to us every day, one person burns with desire for that kingdom and perseveres in good works, while another grows sluggish in his sloth. Nevertheless, God offers it equally to each and brings about what is his own, and works to such a degree in relation to each, by offering and promising the blessedness of his kingdom . . . But he equally imparts this grace both to the reprobate and to the elect, by instructing each one equally about this, so that by the same grace of faith which they obtained, one is aroused to good works, and the other is rendered inexcusable through the negligence of his sluggishness.\(^{253}\)

\(^{248}\) Abelard, Romans, 279.
\(^{250}\) Ibid., 218.
\(^{251}\) Ibid., 280.
\(^{252}\) Ibid., 219.
\(^{253}\) Ibid., 298-99.
The will that works under the desire of grace produces faith, while the will that is slothful, by its stubborn negligence, renders the desire of grace unfruitful and inoperative. Whether one has the good works of faith or willful sloth, one still freely deliberates and judges which should be done. Abelard cites Paul in Rom. 9:24, based on the confession of Rahab and the stubbornness of Pharaoh, to illustrate his point. Both of these Gentiles heard and witnessed the miracles of God’s grace and power respectively; Rahab received the desire of grace with welcoming faith, while Pharaoh saw the miracles yet was stubbornly resistant.

In discussing human free will, Thomas Aquinas first explains that sin is the misuse of free will, whereby humanity earned the penalty of damnation. As such, he understands reprobation as the cause of God’s future judgment and rejection of the reprobate, not the cause of the immediate sin of one who has misused his or her free will. The distinction between Calvin and Aquinas, in his teaching on the causality of reprobation with respect to man’s free will, is clear. He elaborates his argument in the *Summa Theologica*:

Reprobation, however, is not the cause of what is in the present—namely, sin; but it is the cause of abandonment by God. It is the cause, however, of what is assigned in the future—namely, eternal punishment. But guilt proceeds from the free will of the person who is reprobated and deserted by grace. In this way the word of the prophet is true—namely, Destruction is thy own, O Israel.

On the other hand, Aquinas maintains that reprobation by God does not take away the power of free will from the person reprobated. “Hence, when it is said that the reprobated cannot obtain grace, this must not be understood as implying absolute impossibility; but only

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254 Abelard defines faith as holding fast our belief concerning what God has done for us in Christ in His charity (ibid., 162); cf. also ibid., 62-63.
255 Ibid., 301.
256 Wawrykow, “Grace,” 204.
257 God is the cause of reprobation (the reprobate go to hell in accordance with God’s eternal, immutable decree), as Calvin also stipulates.
258 *ST*, I, 23, 3.
conditional impossibility: as was said above (Q. 19, A. 3), that the predestined must necessarily be saved; yet by a conditional necessity, which does not do away with the liberty of choice.”

It is interesting that Aquinas used the word *conditional* in relation to both reprobation and predestination, as not to be so dogmatic as to rule out God's universal grace and will to save.

Concerning foreknowledge, in his *Summa Theologica* article on predestination, Aquinas reiterates that God’s foreknowledge of merit is not the cause of predestination, but rather His mercy and pre-ordained grace. Nevertheless, God “pre-ordains that He will give grace to an individual because He knows beforehand that he will make good use of that grace, as if a king were to give a horse to a soldier because he knows he will make good use of it.”

In Aquinas’ commentary on Romans, he restates his views from the *Summa Theologica* concerning free will and foreknowledge with respect to predestination.

Predestination implies the mental preordaining of things which a person intends to do . . . But foreknowledge differs conceptually from predestination; because foreknowledge implies only the knowledge of future things, whereas predestination implies causality in regard to them. Consequently, God has foreknowledge even of sins, but predestination bears on salutary goods. Hence the Apostle says in Ephesians: *predestined according to the purpose of his will, to the praise and glorious grace which he freely bestowed* (Eph 1:5).

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259 “So also the order of predestination is certain; yet free-will is not destroyed; whence the effect of predestination has its contingency” *ST* I, 23, 6.
260 *ST*, I, 19, 6. Unlike Luther or Calvin, who deny free will, Aquinas believes that “God wills all men to be saved by His antecedent will, which is to will not simply but relatively; and not by His consequent will, which is to will simply” (I, 23, 4).
261 *ST*, I, 23, 5.
In other words, Aquinas differentiates conceptually between God’s foreknowledge in His permissive will and His predestination in His determinative will. Therefore God can foreknow all things that He has not predestined, and so according to Aquinas, divine predestination does not apply to sins. Continuing in Romans 9, he argues:

Consequently, a foreknowledge of merits cannot be the reason for predestination, because the foreknown merits fall under predestination; but the foreknowledge of sins can be a reason for rejection on the part of the punishment prepared for the rejected, inasmuch as God proposes to punish the wicked for the sins they have from themselves, not from God; the just he proposes to reward on account of the merits they do not have from themselves: destruction is your own, 0 Israel; your help is only in me (Hos. 13:9).264

Again in the next passage (vv. 14-18), Aquinas expresses his understanding of foreknowledge with respect to predestination: “Hence he says: I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, i.e., by calling and bestowing grace, I will have mercy on him to whom I know beforehand that I will show mercy, knowing that he will be converted and abide with me.”265 The foreknowledge he expounds is not relationally oriented (as in Origen) but sequentially oriented.

In explicating these concepts regarding predestination, Aquinas strives to integrate God’s goodness and providence with the discussion of free will, thereby making foreknowledge and God’s universal will to save more evident. In his dialectical hermeneutics, he presents the fundamentals of these doctrinal issues. Aquinas, however, knows well that in commenting on this epistle of Romans alone, one might never appreciate the whole spectrum of issues in the doctrine of divine predestination systematically. He then

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263 Ibid., 9:14-18, §781: “‘have I raised you’… should be understood in a permissive sense, namely, that from his just judgment he permits some to fall into sin on account of previous sins.” Cf. also §784: “God is not said to harden anyone directly… this God Himself permits.”
264 Ibid., 9:6-13, §763
265 Ibid., 9:14-18, §772.
methodically shares his theological examination of these related topics in his discourse in the
_Summa Theologica_. Overall, Aquinas affirms the compatibility of free will, foreknowledge
and predestination, similarly to Augustine but unlike Luther or Calvin, who deny free will,
and unlike Pelagius, who deny predestination.\(^{266}\)

Nicholas of Lyra offers an interpretation of free will and foreknowledge that is
probably the closest to Augustine’s. In Romans 9, he affirms Aquinas’s view\(^{267}\) that
Origen’s error should be rejected. Origen states that preceding merits earned in a previous
life are the cause of divine predestination and rejection, as exemplified by Esau and Jacob in
_Rom. 9:11-12_.\(^{268}\) Taking after Aquinas, Nicholas rebuts God’s foreknowledge of merits as
the cause of predestination, although he differs with Aquinas in his “king and horse”
illustration:

> Others have said that the foreknowledge of merits which is eternal is the
> cause of predestination by which God wants to give glory to someone, just
> as a king may give a horse to a soldier because he knows that he will use it
> well. But this is not a helpful way by which foreknown merits are ordained
to glory as to an end. Moreover, willing rightly and ordinately in this way
> belongs to God, who is unable to choose something except rightly or
> ordinately . . . Thus merits, as foreknown by God, or the foreknowledge of
> merits cannot be the cause of predestination but proceed only from the
> divine kindness by which someone is chosen for glory.\(^{269}\)

Although foreknowledge of merits is not the cause of predestination, the foreknowledge of
sins is the cause and basis of condemnation. Those rejected by God fall into sin not because
of the weakness of God, or because of a failure of the “divine impulses” of grace to stir them
up to the good, but because they do not receive these impulses due to “the defect in the

\(^{266}\) Peter Kreeft, ed., _Summa of the Summa_ (SF: Ignatius Press, 1990), 176, n.169.
\(^{267}\) Origen suggests that the effect of predestination is pre-ordained for some on account of pre-existing merits in
a former life, because he believes “that the souls of men were created in the beginning, and according to the
diversity of their works different states were assigned to them in this world when united with the body” (_ST_, I,
23, 5).
\(^{268}\) Nicholas, “Romans 9,” 223.
\(^{269}\) Ibid., 224.
freedom of the will.” Nicholas follows Augustine in maintaining that the will is defective or perverted. This view sets the stage for Luther and the Reformers later to uphold the necessity of faith as a gift, due to the fact that sin corrupts human will and holds it in total bondage.

Summary

Contrary to the notion that the Middle Ages were the “dark ages” in Western civilization, the medieval period sets a high priority on education. In fact, the Scriptures stood at the heart of medieval education and culture. From a sample of Romans commentaries by William of St. Thierry, Peter Abelard, Thomas Aquinas, and Nicholas of Lyra, we see that a breadth of scriptural knowledge, depth of exegetical insight, and height of spiritual devotion. These qualities continue to provide us with a treasury of interpretive principles for the ongoing challenge in the reading of Romans.

Particularly in their reading of Romans, these medieval scholars, enriched by the tradition of the early Church Fathers, ventured to apply a dialectical approach as a hermeneutical style. This style guided their interpretive course contextually and historically. Although the medieval style did not lend itself to allegorical interpretation in the reading of Romans, each medieval author was diligent to uncover the spiritual meanings in the text, following the threefold sense of Scripture that exegetes of the medieval period generally followed. Other features of this period are the emphasis on moral holiness, the development of sacramental theology and a renewed interest in the Old Testament.

270 Augustine, Confessions, VII.16.
271 The literal, mystical, and moral senses. The fourth sense, the anagogical, which mainly pertains to the life to come, is not the main concern of Paul in Romans.
272 Campbell, “Reading Romans in Conversation with Medieval Interpreters,” in Medieval Readings of Romans, 204.
The medieval writers in this study all draw much material from Augustine in his theology of grace and other doctrinal writings. Yet each of them is endowed with his own particular hermeneutical strength which also determines the unique outcome of his reading of Romans 9. William of St. Thierry’s reading of Romans privileges meditation as the mode of access to the spiritual experience of ascending to God. However, Abelard’s reading reveals a distinct ethical theology that emphasizes not only the moral application of the doctrine but its assessment of God himself and how God acts towards humanity.\textsuperscript{273} Aquinas, on the other hand, utilizes a meticulously logical and philosophical dialectic procedure to determine the literal sense of the words in order to attain the sacred message intended by the human and divine authors and to develop a fuller theological discourse on the book of Romans. Above all, the key characteristic that we discern in the medieval reading of Romans is that all four interpreters set forth grace as the central theme of the epistle.\textsuperscript{274} We notice how their hermeneutical emphases influence their reading of election in Romans 9: The love and goodness of God are the starting point of God’s predestination, ordained through God’s providence and the integration of human will and faith, which work under the desire of grace.

\textsuperscript{273} Cartwright, “Twelfth-Century Pauline Exegesis,” 231.
\textsuperscript{274} It is not surprising that Nicholas of Lyra also sees grace as the main theme of Romans: “Here Paul announces the intention of the whole epistle: ‘Paul commends the grace through which some Jews and some Gentiles at Rome were called to faith by showing that both need the grace of God for salvation’” (Levy, \textit{The Bible in Medieval Tradition}, 52).
CHAPTER 2

EXEGETICAL HISTORY (II): READING ROMANS 9 FROM THE SIXTEENTH-CENTURY REFORMATION TO MODERN SCHOLARSHIP

This chapter will begin with the theological expositions of Romans in the sixteenth-century Reformation. The eloquent volumes of writings from the two former eras obviously present indispensable contributions to our understanding of the key issues in the Reformers’ doctrine of predestination. The boundaries of the theological battleground surrounding Romans 9 during the Reformation period will be reviewed and examined. As aforementioned, this era of interpretive history shaped and formulated the controversy over double predestination which had evolved from Augustine’s Four Anti-Pelagian Writings.

During this period, Bucer, Bullinger, Calvin, Luther, Melanchthon, Olevian, and Vermigli are recognized as the foremost spokesmen. We will consider a major Roman Catholic figure, Erasmus, who also produced two commentaries on Romans. As we progress to the modern hermeneutical perspectives on Romans, we will identify the theological-contextual choices that shape the current debates and dialectical understandings. Finally, we will consider the reorientation of modern exegetical scholarship, which presents us with some fresh perspectives and enriches the spectrum of our understanding of the interpretation of Romans 9.

The Reformed Hermeneutics:
The Distinctiveness of the Reformed Expositions of Romans

It is not too farfetched to say that the sixteenth-century Reformation revolves around the epistle of Paul to the Romans. This epistle not only served the Reformers as a textbook for the correct understanding of Christian doctrine, but it was also the central battleground for many of the important debates between Catholic and Protestant theologians. The issues
of grace and merit, faith and work, atonement and justification, freedom or bondage of the will, foreknowledge and predestination, and specifically the doctrine of double predestination—of election and reprobation—all drove these biblical commentators and theologians continually to the book of Romans. For this reason, the Reformation period produced commentaries on Romans that were much more exhaustive than those of the two previous eras, as far as we can judge from the surviving commentaries.¹ The most significant Reformed exegetes were Martin Luther, John Calvin, Casper Olevian, Martin Bucer, Heinrich Bullinger, and Peter Martyr Vermigli, all of whom took up the task of commenting on Romans, not counting the major Roman Catholic figures such as Desiderius Erasmus, John Colet² and Thomas Cajetan.³ The focus of this research, however, will be on the sixteenth-century hermeneutical representation of the reading of Romans in Luther, Erasmus,⁴ and Calvin. These three stand out for the following two reasons: a) their commentaries have been held in high esteem since the time of the Reformation, and b) their commentaries on Romans have shaped not only their fellow Reformers and Reformed theology but have also immensely influenced Western Protestant theology since, specifically through their treatment of Romans in their theological disputations. We will therefore consider each of these Reformers’ readings of Romans 9 in detail, particularly regarding the doctrine of predestination.

² Strictly speaking, Colet is pre-Reformation because he died before the Reformation schism. In fact, he died before Luther’s excommunication.
⁴ I choose Erasmus as a representation of the Roman Catholic scholarship because of his polemics with Martin Luther on the issue of human will.


**Luther on Romans**

In his *Preface to the Epistle to the Romans* (1522), Luther writes, “This Epistle is really the chief part of the New Testament and the very purest Gospel.”⁵ This statement reveals the place of Romans in his understanding of the Gospel, which is reflected most distinctively in Luther’s own faith and his hermeneutics. In fact, Luther establishes a biblical hermeneutical approach based on this principle: “Interpret what you read according to Romans.”⁶ Given the centrality of Romans in his interpretation of Scripture and the construction of the early Reformed theology, it is crucial to know that an adequate evaluation of the Reformed reading of Romans begins with Luther’s hermeneutical emphasis. In his Romans preface, Luther introduces some of the most important Pauline concepts for this epistle, including law, gospel, sin, grace, faith, righteousness, flesh, spirit, Christ and the cross.⁷ However, two specific themes emerge: the total depravity of the human heart and the necessity of faith. The result of human depravity is the prevention of any free will for the good.⁸ Luther’s conviction that there is *no free desire for good*, first expressed in his exegesis of Romans, later comes to full strength in *The Bondage of the Will* (1525) in his dispute with Erasmus.

Unlike the medieval writers, Luther underscores faith, as bound to grace, to be the main theological theme of this epistle. This is made obvious in his preface. First, Luther

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⁶ Holder, “Romans in the Light of Reformation Reception,” 3.

⁷ Luther, *Romans*, xi, xxiii.

⁸ “But God judges according to what is at the bottom of the heart, and for this reason, His law makes its demands on the inmost heart and cannot be satisfied with works . . . Hence all men are called liars, in Psalm 116, for the reason that no one keeps or can keep God's law from the bottom of the heart, for everyone finds in himself displeasure in what is good and pleasure in what is bad. If, then, there is no willing pleasure in the good, then the inmost heart is not set on the law of God, then there is surely sin, and God’s wrath is deserved . . . The Conclusion is that at the bottom of your heart you hate the law” (ibid., xi-xii).
defines faith as a work of God in us: “Faith . . . is a divine work in us. It changes us and makes us to be born anew of God (John 1).”\(^9\) Then, faith is a living out of our knowledge of God’s grace: “Faith is a living, daring confidence in God’s grace.”\(^10\) Luther then proceeds to explicate the role of faith in each chapter. Chapters 1-3 contrast the faith of a righteous person with the gross sin of unbelief, and their point is that justification comes through faith in Christ. Next, Luther corroborates his teaching on faith with the examples of Abraham and David, and he concludes that Abraham was made righteous apart from all his works by faith alone. In chapter 5, he dwells on Paul’s exposition of the fruits and works of faith. In chapter 6, Luther draws our attention to the special work of faith in identifying our life with the death and resurrection of Christ and completing our baptism, which signifies a death to sin and a new life of grace. Chapters 7 and 8 continue to deal with faith in the process of sanctification through the indwelling ministries of the Holy Spirit. In the next three chapters, Luther explains the eternal predestination of God, which determines who will believe and who will not, who can be set free from sin and who cannot. To the section from chapter 12 onward, Luther gives the subtitle “faith is not idle,” meaning that those who are justified by faith should live their faith outwardly in all relationships.\(^11\)

In Luther’s interpretation of Romans, he follows the medieval method and practice of offering both “glosses”\(^12\) and “scholia.”\(^13\) But instead of purely relying on a close reading of texts in their original language, dwelling on the syntax and literary technique to the

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\(^9\) Ibid., xiv.
\(^10\) Ibid., xv.
\(^11\) Ibid., xv-xxiii.
\(^12\) Glosses are shorter explanatory remarks on the text, dwelling on its grammar and syntax, often with a close reading of the Greek text. Luther relies in part on Erasmus and Melanchthon for his understanding of the Greek text. See Mickey L. Mattox, “Martin Luther’s Reception of Paul,” *A Companion to Paul in the Reformation* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 103.
depreciation of the theological applications of Romans, Luther stresses his theology of faith. The true sign of faith for Luther is for one to come before God with total humility, free from the boast of any human righteousness, even that which is ours from Christ. Thus, he writes:

The objective of this Epistle is to destroy all wisdom and works of the flesh no matter how important these may appear in our eyes or those of others. For this reason Augustine says in his book Concerning the Spirit and the Letter that the Apostle “vehemently inveighs against the proud, arrogant persons who glory in their works.”

Luther’s reading of Romans is significantly influenced by Augustine. But undeniably his interpretation also relies most cogently on his own experience—a reflection of his struggle for a faith that is real and not idle, and an assurance that speaks peace to the restlessness of the soul. Luther’s reading of Romans speaks with conviction, as he articulates from his own experience and the apostle’s theological deliberation.

**Erasmus on Romans**

Erasmus is perhaps most known for his debate with Luther over the issue of free will. His *Annotations* and *Paraphrases on Romans* are considered to be important contributions

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14 “For up to now it has been evilly darkened with commentaries, and all kinds of idle talk” (Luther, *Romans*, xi).
15 Ibid., 13. Mattox maintains that in Luther’s early Romans lectures, humility is sign of true conversion because they are inseparable (Mattox, “Martin Luther’s Reception of Paul,” 123).
16 Ibid., 12.
17 Luther cites Augustine 118 times (see John H. John’s index in *LW* 25, 526), and Luther’s shorter commentary on Romans refers to Augustine and his writings no fewer than 26 times by my count.
18 Luther, *Romans*, xix.
19 Luther, *Romans*, xviii.
20 *LW* 25, xi and 151, note 27; *LW* 34, 336-37. “Luther’s rediscovery of the gospel was preceded by an agonizing personal struggle with the problem of sin and of attempted self-justification” (D. A. Hagner, “Paul and Judaism—The Jewish Matrix of Early Christianity: Issues in the Current Debate,” *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 3 [1993]: 113).
21 Generally, the Church Fathers’ readings of Romans were prompted by the need to address the moral situation of their era and the teachings of the Gnostics. The medieval scholars’ readings were influenced more by the Patristic writings than their own experiences.
22 Erasmus’ *Annotations* was first published with the 1516 edition of Erasmus’ New Testament, while the Romans *Paraphrases* appeared in 1517. See Robert D. Sider, “Preface,” in Erasmus, *Paraphrases on Romans*
to the Reformation reading of this epistle, especially in the verbal and grammatical study of
the text in both Greek and Hebrew. In addition to being a textual critic, he was an astute
biblical interpreter and theologian. His own Pauline studies played an essential role in his
free will debate with Luther, especially in conjunction with patristic and medieval sources.
In his commentaries on Romans, Erasmus relied most often on the Church Fathers: Jerome,
Ambrosiaster, Chrysostom, Origen, and medieval writers such as Theophylact and Nicholas
of Lyra. 23 And yet, according to Sider, he was never slavish in his appropriation of these
writers, even of his favorites. 24 Though Erasmus sometimes went against Augustine’s
interpretation, 25 he nevertheless studied Augustine’s Propositions and the Unfinished
Commentary on Romans carefully. 26

Strictly speaking, the Paraphrases is not a commentary. Rather, it clarifies the text
and offers an overview of Paul’s theme and argument. 27 Erasmus states a fundamental
principle for his paraphrase of Scripture: “The meaning is of primary importance; the form
can be changed to serve that end.” 28 As a matter of fact, Erasmus emphasizes that his
Paraphrases should be differentiated from translation in that his intention is simply to make
the text of Scripture clearer. In his presentation of the Paraphrases to Cardinal Grimani,
Erasmus writes in his Dedicatory Letter that he labored hard in “bridging gaps, smoothing
rough passages, bringing order out of confusion and simplicity out of complication, untying knots, throwing light on dark places, and giving Hebrew turns of speech a Roman dress."\(^{29}\)

On the other hand, Erasmus’ *Annotations* is comparable to modern critical commentary in its classical, historical and grammatical studies. Hence, his *Annotations* make available the Greek text and the Latin translation of the New Testament.\(^{30}\) Obviously, Erasmus’ strength is his proficiency in Greek and his systematic expositional references to the patristic and medieval writings.\(^{31}\) Therefore, Erasmus’ hermeneutical approach to Romans differs from Luther’s in that he applies Greek manuscripts, Latin manuscripts, and an array of patristic writers, Latin and Greek, to the exegetical reading of the text and its variants.\(^{32}\) Furthermore, he frequently explicates the semantics of individual words and their connotations, identifies Greek idioms, sometimes infers the Hebrew idioms underlying the Greek, and discusses the significance of syntax and style. This study of language also inevitably leads to theological issues\(^{33}\) such as the meaning of faith\(^{34}\) and predestination,\(^{35}\) which Erasmus addresses with strict adherence to the historical context and syntactical demands of the text, thus avoiding the undue influence of theological commitments alone.

**Calvin on Romans**

As one of the most outstanding leaders and theologians of the Reformation, Calvin gives a very high assessment of the book of Romans in his reading of the Scripture. In his

\(^{29}\) Ibid., 2.

\(^{30}\) Erasmus, *Annotations*, ix.

\(^{31}\) In the *De copia* (first published in 1512), he writes: “We shall add greatly to our linguistic resources if we translate authors from the Greek, as that language is particularly rich in subject matter and vocabulary. It will also prove quite useful on occasion to compete with these Greek authors by paraphrasing what they have written” (Erasmus, *Paraphrases*, xii).

\(^{32}\) Erasmus, *Annotations*, xi.

\(^{33}\) Ibid.

\(^{34}\) Ibid., 42-46.

\(^{35}\) Ibid., 10-15, 224-28.
Argument for the epistle of Romans, Calvin writes that “when any one gains a knowledge of this Epistle, he has an entrance opened to him to all the most hidden treasures of Scripture.” In Calvin’s hermeneutical approach to Scripture is his aversion to the allegorical method and to all excessive typology. In his dedication to Simon Grynaeus, he states his exegetical principle: “that the chief excellency of an expounder consists in lucid brevity.” In applying his exegetical principle of the plain and simple sense (lucid brevity), Calvin explicates Romans on what he maintains is the main subject of the whole epistle—justification by faith. Thus, Calvin summarizes the first five chapters of Romans stating: “The subject then of these chapters may be stated thus, — man’s only righteousness is through the mercy of God in Christ, which being offered by the Gospel is apprehended by faith.”

Although he treats the sixth to the eighth chapters under the theme of sanctification, Calvin proceeds to expound Paul’s warning against the “stumbling stones,” lest the Christian faith be smeared with propounded slander. On the other hand, the “hidden renovation” of sanctification can and must be “apprehended by faith,” through the illumination and prayer of the Holy Spirit. Again, Calvin highlights faith in the following chapters dealing with the election of the Israelites and the Gentiles—both “led as it were by the righteousness of faith.”

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36 Calvin, Romans, xxix.
37 Calvin, Romans, vii.
38 Ibid., xxxii. Perhaps it is due to Calvin’s ideal to observe the merit of lucid brevity that he considers Bucer’s commentary on Romans to be deep and lengthy (ibid., xxvi).
40 Ibid., xxix, cf. xxx-xxxi.
41 Ibid., xxix-xxx.
42 Ibid., 218.
43 Ibid., 271.
44 Ibid., 297, 312.
45 Ibid., xxxv.
Hence, for Calvin, the epistle of Romans provides *in nuce* a hermeneutical framework for understanding Scripture, or as Hansen describes, the door and passageway to the heart and breath of biblical teaching and religious doctrines. This is so because Romans is the account that amplifies the central Reformation doctrine of justification\(^\text{46}\) by faith. However, Calvin also contends that “reading Scripture must be guided reading,” and that “his *Institutes* provided that guidance.”\(^\text{47}\) Holder elaborates on this hermeneutical principle of Calvin: “Good biblical interpretation must be controlled by correct doctrine. The *Preface* to the 1539 *Institutes* claimed it to be a summary of doctrine, so that one reading scripture will know how to understand it.”\(^\text{48}\) In contrast to Luther, whose reading of Romans reflects most distinctively a struggle with faith, both personal and ecclesiological, the interpretation of Romans for Calvin is interdependent with the theological presupposition and framework of his *Institutes*. This interdependence is evident in Calvin’s claims that the proper interpretation of Romans must be guided by the doctrines prescribed in his *Institutes*, and the *Institutes* frequently cite Romans\(^\text{49}\) in its deliberation and discussion of Christian doctrines.

### Summary

The theology of the Reformation of the sixteenth century to a large extent revolves around the book of Romans. Passages of this epistle become crucial polemical content for theologians disputing about the bondage and freedom of the will, the nature of justification, and the problem of election and reprobation. For the Reformers such as Luther and Calvin,


\(^{47}\) Ehrensperger, “Reformers in Conversation over Romans,” 195.


\(^{49}\) Calvin cites Romans over 333 times, the most amongst the New Testament books; just 40 times fewer than the Psalms (373 times), which is the most cited book in the Old Testament.
their hermeneutical presupposition that the heart of the gospel is justification by faith, without the works of the law, becomes a central framework for reading Romans. However, other factors guide their interpretations, especially the influence of the tradition or the writings of the Church Fathers, which they studied closely. Both of these streams, doctrinal and traditional, provided the Reformers with an emerging interpretative choice that has swayed Western Protestant theology ever since.

By reading the Reformers on Romans, one can observe significant traits in their exegetical approach. The first trait is a thematic difference: The patristic reading of Romans dwells within the context and practice of piety, prayer and worship. The writers’ focus is on the Christological aspect of the salvation of the Gentiles.50 Turning to the medieval period, the hermeneutical emphasis of the commentators on Romans falls on the premise of prevenient grace from Augustine,51 and the grace of God is the main theme of Romans. However, when we come to the sixteenth century, the Reformers maintain that the faith of justification is Paul’s central theological issue in this epistle. The second trait of the Reformers’ exegetical approach is a choice of patristic sources. What makes the difference between interpretive choices for different sixteenth-century interpreters is their “guiding diachronic conversation partner”52 in the patristic age. We notice that for both Luther and

50 Origen summarizes the main theme of Romans in that salvation has come to the Gentiles, emerging and transferring from the Jews through the coming of Christ, who is the Savior and the righteousness of God (Origen, Romans, 3.1.3; 9.1.1). Origen mentions that “God has made Christ our justice” more than 30 times in his commentary on Romans (Origen, Romans, Books 1-5, 25). Cf. Ambrosiaster, Romans, 3:22-25; Irenaeus, Against Heresies, IV, 26.1. Also see Mihoc, “Greek Church Fathers”, 22.
51 Augustine, On the Predestination of the Saints, 12.37.
52 Ehrensperger, “Conclusion: Reformers in Conversation over Romans: Diversity in Renewal and Continuity,” Reformation Readings of Romans, 198.
Calvin, Augustine is their one source for the doctrinal interpretation of Romans. However, Erasmus relies most often on Jerome, Chrysostom and Origen over Augustine.

The third trait in the Reformers’ exegetical approach is their textual or doctrinal guide. Erasmus’ interpretation of Romans is purely based on his study of the Greek text, especially the word studies and grammatical analysis of the text in both Greek and Hebrew languages. Without the binding doctrinal frameworks of Luther and Calvin, Erasmus uses his proficiency in Greek to provide himself the freedom to exercise his exegetical sensibility. On the other hand, Luther’s reading of Romans is in some measure affected by his own struggle with faith and conscience, and by the controversy with the Papal authority. Moreover, Calvin believes that any reading of Scripture must be a guided reading, and that his Institutes provides that guidance. A fourth trait in the Reformers’ exegetical approach concerns individual salvation. Beginning with Luther’s theology of justification by faith and his exposition of Romans according to his sense of “introspective conscience”, the theology of individual salvation becomes more prominent than in the medieval reading. Such individualism is attributed to the theology of the sixteenth-century Reformation and has further entrenched a deterministic view of individual destiny in the understanding of predestination, either with a view to salvific election or to eternal reprobation.

Predestination in the Reformed Interpretation of Romans 9

The Protestant Reformation provides a major theological foundation for interpreting the passage in question in Romans 9, and double predestination is anchored within this text.

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53 “Calvin could not follow the early Augustine, for that position allows too great an opportunity for the mischief concerning the freedom of the will to creep into the minds of believers” (Holder, “Calvin’s Hermeneutic and tradition,” 110).
54 “Erasmus demonstrated a sensitivity to the nuance of the Pauline text that took priority over the traditional Augustinian rendering of the doctrine” (Holder, “Romans in the Light of Reformation Reception,” 5).
In this section, I will cover the expositions of Bullinger, Calvin, Luther and Vermigli on Romans 9. The expositions of the two foremost Reformers, Calvin and Luther, as well as those of the Catholic theologian Erasmus, will be the focal points. Notably, the Reformed writers are greatly influenced by Augustine’s concept of grace and his view of predestination. Luther, the key Reformer, holds that the human will is in total bondage to the depravity of sin, and therefore does not have freedom in the way that the Early Church Fathers claimed. His exegesis of Romans 9 is consistent with the basic presupposition of his thesis in *The Bondage of the Will*. However, even as Luther deals with the topics of election and predestination, he does not impose the doctrine of double predestination on the text in question. On the other hand, John Calvin dwells on unconditional election based on the uncompromising absolute decree of God given in the double predestination of the human race. The eternal and absolute decree takes place according to the secret plan and hidden counsel of God. On the other end of the Reformation spectrum, Erasmus, while a Catholic, is no less an advocate of reform. His works *Paraphrases* and *Annotations* won him great commendation, but he was also the target of harsh criticism, especially from Luther, who insults Erasmus’ work on *The Freedom of the Will*.  

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56 *Inst.*, III.23.1; 21.5; cf. 23.10; Calvin, *Romans*, 9:11, 349-51.  
57 Ibid., III.22.4, III.23.1, 5.  
58 Erasmus, *Paraphrases*, xv.  
59 In his *The Bondage of the Will*, Luther addresses Erasmus as “my friend,” yet in his letter to Nicolas Armsdoff, Luther reveals his utter contempt for Erasmus by insulting, underrating and misrepresenting his religion and faith. “For I know the man well, from his skin to his heart, that he is not worthy of being spoken to. Or dealt with, by any good man; such a hypocrite is he, and so full of reprobate envy and malevolence.” See Luther, *The Bondage of the Will*, trans. Henry Cole (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1984), 398. “That Erasmus was actually mad . . . I only irritated the viper, so as to cause him at last to give birth to his Viperspis” (ibid., 400). “He published lately, among his other works, his Catechism, a production evidently of satanic subtlety. For, with a purpose full of craft . . . to infect them with his poisons” (ibid., 401). “For my Bondage of the Will proves to you how difficult a task it is to cope with that proteus Erasmus . . . an irritated hornet” (ibid., 416). “He is certainly useless” (ibid., 418). “Erasmus of Rotterdam is the vilest miscreant that ever disgraced the earth . . . He is a very Caiaphas.” See Luther, *Table Talk*, trans. and ed. William Hazlitt (London: H. G. Bohn, 1857), 283. Luther scorns Erasmus as “trifler with truth, a scoffer at religion, an unbeliever” in his *Table Talk*. Cf. Philip S. Watson, “Introduction: The Erasmian Enigma,” *Luther and...*
Martin Luther took the two patriarchs, Isaac and Jacob, as sons of the promise. He understood them as the sons of election and predestination, through whom the Scriptures demonstrate that God’s foreknowledge and predestination are according to grace and not according to personal merits.\textsuperscript{60} In other words, similarly to Origen,\textsuperscript{61} Luther stresses that God’s election is a positive determination, as it is ever comforting to know that human salvation is sure in the hand of God alone, through the cross.\textsuperscript{62} The condemnation or reprobation of God, by contrast, leads to the “commendation of grace and the destruction of our presumptuousness.”\textsuperscript{63} The positive side of predestination applies to those who believe by faith. For example, in his discussion of Esau, Luther argues:

It was of no advantage for Esau that he was conceived, like Jacob, of the same great father and the same great mother and of so chaste a bed, and born according to the flesh, yes, even as the firstborn. How much less will it benefit the unbelieving Jews, born long afterwards, that they are the sons of the patriarchs according to the flesh, if they are without faith, that is, if they have not been elected by God!\textsuperscript{64}

Regarding his understanding of verse 15, Luther notes and dwells on God’s mercy for all:

A statement such as this appears harsh and cruel, but it is very sweet, because thereby He has summoned to His side every help, every salvation, so that He Himself alone may save us, as we read below (Rom. 11:32): “God has consigned all men to disobedience” (not in a cruel way, but) “that He may have mercy on all,” that is, that He can prepare mercy for all, which no one else could or would do as long as the presumptuousness and pride of our self-righteousness are in resistance.\textsuperscript{65}


\textsuperscript{60} LW 25:81.

\textsuperscript{61} Scheck, \textit{Origen and the History of Justification}, 152.

\textsuperscript{62} LW 5:378. In commenting on Luther’s statement that the book of Romans is “truly the purest gospel” (\textit{LW} 35:365), Watson remarks, “The letter to the Romans treats of justification by faith alone, and election by grace alone, because the gospel itself does so. Thus this letter is ‘truly the purest gospel,’ a unique textual articulation of the gospel’s essential dynamics.” See Watson, \textit{Beyond the New Perspective}, 302.

\textsuperscript{63} LW 25:394.

\textsuperscript{64} Ibid., 386.

\textsuperscript{65} LW 25:82, n.15.
All through his *Glosses* and *Scholia* on Romans, Luther dwells more on the assurance side of predestination through the election of grace. While Calvin will speak dogmatically on the decree of God in the rejection of the reprobate, Luther merely states that those being condemned determine themselves to remain in sin, not by the force of God’s decree. For Luther, the only reason for the apostle to cite the commanding will of God in enmeshing the reprobate to remain in sin and to love iniquity is for God to demonstrate His anger in judging the sin of the world. Therefore, Luther differs from Calvin in that for Luther, the commanding will of God is a holy will that demonstrates His angry judgment against the iniquity of sin, while for Calvin, the hidden counsel of God is an immutable will of God to show His just severity against the reprobate. In other words, Luther’s doctrine of the immutability of God’s decree matters more to reprobation as a consequence and less to the cause of reprobation. God’s immutability as the cause of reprobation would implicate the predestination of God—it would mean that God foreordained those sinners to be reprobates and that decree does not change. Reprobation as a consequence implies the inevitable judgment of damnation for the guilt of the reprobates, on account of their stubborn violation of God’s law and hence the ultimate rejection of God Himself.

In his *Scholia*, just as in his *The Bondage of The Will*, Luther denies human free will. Not only does Luther deny human free will, he also rejects the notion that Christ died

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66 “We are all of necessity in sin and damnation, but no one is in sin by force and against his will. For he who hates sin is already beyond sin and belongs to the elect. But those whom God hardens are those to whom He gives voluntarily to will to be and remain in sin and to love iniquity. Such people are necessarily in sin by the necessity of immutability, but not by force” (*LW* 25:376).
67 Ibid.
69 “There is no such thing as ‘Free-will’” and “Free-will is a mere empty term” (Luther, *Bondage of the Will*, sect. 26 and 50). Also in his disputation against the argument for human free will that proceeds from the “prudence of the flesh,” Luther answers, “The free will without grace has absolutely no power to achieve righteousness, but of necessity it is in sin. Therefore blessed Augustine is correct in his book Against Julian when he calls it ‘a bound will rather than a free will.’ For when we possess grace, then the will is actually free,
for all humanity. First, he takes 1 Timothy 2:4, where “God desires all men to be saved,” as simply pertaining to the elect. It is only for the sake of the elect that the apostle admonishes the church in Ephesus through Timothy. Luther furthermore admits the atonement of Christ on the cross to be limited, as he understands Jesus’ new covenant in His blood as being provided only for the elect, “for many” but not for all (Mk. 14:24; Matt. 26:28). In Luther’s interpretation of Romans 9, we can see a clear departure from the theological readings of Romans 9 by the early Church Fathers and the medieval theologians, specifically concerning free will, foreknowledge, predestination and the universality of grace.

John Calvin builds on the Reformation theology of election and bolsters Augustine’s doctrine of predestination by stressing the certainty of double predestination (particularly that of reprobation), yet denying the foreknowledge of God as taught by the early Church Fathers. In his commentary on Romans 9:11, Calvin maintains that God has sufficient reason in His own will for election and for reprobation:

As the blessing of the covenant separates the Israelitic nation from all other people, so the election of God makes a distinction between men in that nation, while he predestinates some to salvation, and others to eternal condemnation… False then is the dogma, and contrary to God’s word, — that God elects or rejects, as he foresees each to be worthy or unworthy of his favor.

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70 This term “many” in the NT context is used not in contrast with “all” but with “few.” “Many” should be read with I John 2:2, “not only for ours [few] but also for the sins of the whole world [many],” as the apostle John understood what Jesus meant when He instituted the Lord’s Supper.

71 LW 25:375. However, Luther seems to contradict himself in his commentary on Gal. 3:13, where he recounts the mystery and wonder of God’s mercy through Christ’s “universal” atonement: “This is the most joyous of all doctrines and the one that contains the most comfort. It teaches that we have the indescribable and inestimable mercy and love of God. When the merciful Father saw that we were being oppressed through the Law, that we were being held under a curse, and that we could not be liberated from it by anything, He sent His Son into the world, heaped all the sins of all men upon Him . . . By this deed [His death on the cross] the whole world is purged and expiated from all sins, and thus it is set free from death and from evil” LW 26:280.

72 Calvin, Romans, 349-51. John Owen (1788-1867), the vicar of Thrussington and the editor of Calvin’s Romans commentary (different from John Owen, a puritan Reformed theologian of the seventeenth century),
In fact Calvin in his exposition stresses that the perdition of the reprobate rests on the just severity of God. In his commentary on Romans 9:21-23, Calvin further contends:

The reprobate are the vessels of wrath. . . that the reprobate are vessels prepared for destruction; there is yet no doubt but that the preparation of both is connected with the secret counsel of God. . . that the reprobate give up or cast themselves into destruction; but he intimates here, that before they are born they are destined to their lot.

According to Calvin, the “plain sense” in understanding such a mystery concerning the reprobates is to submit simply to the hidden counsel and decree of God. In referring to the election of God, Calvin asserts that the whole matter of election necessarily depends on the mercy of God alone, and it is vain to seek the grounds of it in any personal merits. On the other hand, the unquestionable justice of human reprobation rests on no lesser cause than the immutable will of God. Therefore, for Calvin, God’s will is the cause of all things that exist and is the highest rule of righteousness. In reference to the predestination involved in “hardening” Pharaoh to destruction, Calvin again refers to “the hidden counsel of God” and

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comments on Calvin’s denial of God’s foreknowledge as part of His predestination: “Yet some of the Fathers, as Chrysostom and Theodoret, as well as some modern divines, ascribe election to foreseen works. How this is reconcilable with the argument of the Apostle, and with the instances he adduces, it is indeed a very hard matter to see. One way by which the Apostle’s argument is evaded, is, that the election here is to temporal and outward privileges. Be it so: let this be granted; but it is adduced by the Apostle as an illustration — and of what? most clearly of spiritual and eternal election. He refers both to the same principle, to the free choice of God, and not to anything in man. ‘God foresaw the disposition of each’ — Theodoret and Chrysostom ‘His election corresponds with the foreseen disposition of men’ — Theodoret ‘It was done by the prescience of God, whereby he knew while yet unborn, what each would be’ — Augustine” (ibid., note 1, 351).

73 Ibid., 9:11, 349.
74 Ibid., 369-70.
75 Ibid., 349.
76 Bolsec’s debate with Calvin stresses that it is fruitless to enter into His secret counsel when one should be content to hold fast to His simple Word (Holtrop, The Bolsec Controversy, 56). Bullinger also warns against “debating scrupulously on the secret judgment of God” (ibid., 811). In fact, when Calvin appealed to Bullinger in Zurich for his support, Bullinger in turn chided Calvin for being too speculative and for going beyond the simplicity of Scripture. Calvin encountered similar opinions from Viret and the Basel theologians. Holtrop wrote: “Those ministers concluded that we need a biblical moderation especially in discussing predestination” (ibid., 61).
“the hidden fountain of His providence” whereby God “appointed” and “designedly ordained” the contumacy of Pharaoh in order to exhibit His own power. Thus, unlike Luther, Calvin’s doctrine of reprobation insists that God’s secret and immutable decree is a cause of reprobation rather than prognosticating reprobation as a consequence of sin. Similarly to Luther, however, Calvin’s interpretation of Romans 9 assumes a reading that has in mind the future destiny of individuals rather than a corporate implication.

While Calvin does not cover the issue of Christ’s atonement in Romans 9, he states in his commentary on Romans 3:25 that “there is but one true expiation for all.” One can take this to imply a teaching on Christ’s universal or unlimited atonement. Nevertheless, from the implications of his teaching on the particularity of election, we can infer that Calvin thinks that Christ’s atonement is limited in its effect, as far as the elect are concerned. Calvin is

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79 Ibid., 361.
80 Ibid., 360.
81 Inst., III.23.1, 10; Calvin, Romans, 9:11, 349-51.
82 Calvin, Romans, 9:20-22, 365-67; Luther, Romans, 113-14, 125.
83 Paul’s various illustrations of God’s immense and sovereign mercy in initiating the salvation of humankind have more of a corporate than individual implication.
84 Ibid., 3:25, 145.
85 Calvin asserts that the gift of faith is rare as he reinterprets Isa. 53:1 (Inst., III.22.10). In explicating Matt. 22:14, “Many are called but few are chosen,” Calvin writes: “There are two kinds of call. There is the general call, by which God invites all equally to himself through the outward preaching of the word . . . The other kind of call is special, which he designs for the most part to give to the believers alone” (ibid., 24:8). However, Melanchthon was increasingly convinced that a logically rigorous predestination was contrary to religious experience; it undercuts the moral responsibility of human beings. On one hand, he wants to protect the individuality and responsibility of people without claiming that they are the authors of justification. On the other hand, he believes that each individual has a genuine freedom and responsibility, which God does not abolish. Therefore Melanchthon summarizes that salvation is a gift, but it is not a gift if forced upon man (Holtrop, The Bolsec Controversy, 807).
86 Though Calvin never applies the term “limited” to the extent of Christ’s atonement, yet it is apparent that Calvin would never uphold universal atonement. His pronouncement that Christ’s atonement is efficient only for the elect is tantamount to subscribing to a limited atonement.
87 Regarding Christ’s atonement for the sins of the whole world in 1 John 2:2, Calvin explains: “for the design of John was no other than to make this benefit common to the whole church. Then under the word all or whole, he does not include the reprobate, but designates those who should believe as well as those who were then scattered through various parts of the world” (Calvin, The Catholic Epistles, 173). When Augustine’s follower Gottschalk (c. 869) restricted the significance of the atonement to the elect, the result was that atonement from then on related to the invisible church, that is to say, to those individuals whom God had chosen from eternity. Vicarious substitution came to mean that Christ took the place of certain [elect] individuals. See Hans
ambiguous on this point; he does not fully explain how the eternal decree of reprobation could be theologically consistent with the all-sufficiency of Christ’s atonement—“there is one true expiation for all.” It appears that Calvin faces a dilemma, insofar as he is viewed as advocating an efficacy of the atonement that is determined by election. The main underlying questions raised by this issue are as follows: what does Calvin mean in affirming that Christ’s death is a true expiation for all, and does he include the reprobate in the “all”? In fact, when it comes to the interpretation of those “universal” texts, his explanations are always influenced by his doctrine of predestination as described in his *Institutes*, which (he claims) provides the hermeneutical guide to reading Scripture.

An important contrast to Calvin and Luther can be found in Erasmus. Erasmus relies extensively on Paul’s epistle to the Romans in *De libero arbitrio* because he knows precisely that this Pauline epistle presents the most problematic scriptural evidence against free will. Accordingly, he invites his readers to discern whether evidence to support free will is within this epistle of Paul, whom Erasmus considers to be “the vigorous champion of grace, who lays unremitting siege to the works of the Law.” Erasmus further explores the illustration of Paul in Romans 9:17-18 concerning the hardening of Pharaoh’s heart, which seems to contradict human free will. In Erasmus’ *Paraphrases*, he contends,

> No one is condemned except by his own guilt. No one is saved except by the kindness of God . . . For God does not harden human minds to hinder

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88 1 Tim. 2:4; Jn. 12:32; 1 Jn. 2:2; 2 Pet. 3:9. Like Bolsec, Melanchthon takes seriously the “universal” texts of Scripture—such as Jn. 6:40, Matt. 11:28, Jn. 3:16, Rom. 3:22, 10:12, and 1 Tim. 2:4. Melanchthon quotes Chrysostom at this point: “God draws, but he draws those who are willing” (ibid., 808-09). Bullinger further says that God “wills all men to be saved.” Therefore, He commands us “to preach the gospel to every creature (Mk. 16:15)” (ibid., 88).


them from believing in the gospel of Christ; but to illuminate the magnitude of his kindness and to reveal the glory of his power, God uses the stubbornness of those who, through their own obduracy, refuse to believe… No one resists the will of God, but the will of God is not the cause of your destruction. He did not harden the heart of Pharaoh in such a way that he himself caused Pharaoh’s stubbornness, but although he knew the tyrant’s arrogance was worthy of sudden destruction, nevertheless little by little He used heavier punishments against him by which Pharaoh might have been corrected if he had not resisted by his own ill will. But the divine leniency provoked his impious mind even more. God, therefore, turned Pharaoh’s evil into his own glory.  

Similarly, regarding the illustration of the potter’s clay, Erasmus maintains, “[I]f God abandons someone in his sins, thus he was born, there is no injustice. But if he calls someone to righteousness, his mercy is a free gift. In the case of the former, God reveals his own righteousness so that he may be feared. To the latter he discloses his own goodness so that he may be loved.”  

Erasmus’s understanding of God’s predestination in relation to human free will was not rebuffed by God’s foreknowledge. It was clear to him that God wills or predestines the same things as He foreknows. He further explains that “in Greek this verb is sometimes understood in the sense of ‘decide’ or ‘determine’ because coming to a resolution implies knowing.” The key difference that Erasmus proposed is the following: “foreknow” is used in contexts of deliberating and deciding, which could in some way still be changed; while “predestine” is used of one who now openly proclaims what he has decided and cannot be changed. Erasmus prefers that God’s foreknowledge not be used to explain human choice as related to God’s predestination. As far as he is concerned, the distinction between foreknowledge and predestination is simply a matter of opinion and should not cause one to  

92 Erasmus, Paraphrases, 55-56. Cf. also Erasmus, Controversies: De libero arbitrio, 46.  
93 Erasmus, Paraphrases, 56.  
94 Erasmus, Controversies: De libero arbitrio, 48.  
95 Erasmus, Annotations, 226.  
96 Ibid.
be alienated. On the other hand, Erasmus believes that the apostle wrote these statements on God’s foreknowledge and predestination in the latter section of Romans 8 primarily as a pastoral assurance for those believers who might be despairing in their suffering.

Erasmus continues to Romans 9, wherein Paul expresses the anguish of his soul as to why so many more of his own countrymen do not know the love of God in Christ Jesus. Moving from the assurance of God’s love and keeping, Paul ventures further to plead for the Jewish people to see God’s extraordinary mercy in calling and waiting for them. Paul ponders whether only the Jewish people, to whom he himself is joined by a relationship of nation and race, would likewise be united with him in the faith of Christ. In his Paraphrases on Romans 9, Erasmus maintains that the division between the elect and the reprobate relies on but one difference, the distinction between faith and arrogance.

[N]ot all who sprung from the blood of Abraham are necessarily the sons of Abraham so that they might claim for themselves the inheritance of promise, but only those who display the faith [emphasis added] through which Abraham deserved this happiness which was to be given to his descendants . . . Isaac was born, not according to the common method of birth, but from a father who had faith in God despite his sterility, and from an old woman who was likewise barren. Thus the power of God and the faith of the father gave birth to Isaac more truly than did the flesh . . . but those belong to the seed of Abraham who are people of faith, inasmuch as it was through faith that Abraham deserved the promise of God . . . he meant the one and only son of faith whom God had especially chosen by his will, not from the commendation of circumcision . . . but on account of the merit of the father’s faith.

Remarkably, what happened and was required in the case of Abraham and Isaac likewise happened and was differentiated in the case of Jacob and Esau. What ultimately distinguished these twins from one another? It was not blood relationship, not observance of

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97 Ibid., 226-27.
98 Ibid., 53.
99 Ibid., 54.
the law, not the sign of circumcision, but Jacob’s *faith* displayed at Bethel. Likewise, God admits the Gentiles by the merit of *faith* to the inheritance. As for Esau, Pharaoh, and the vessels of wrath, Erasmus attributes their rejection to their *arrogance*.

No one resists the will of God, but the will of God is not the cause of your destruction. He did not harden the heart of Pharaoh in such a way that he himself caused Pharaoh’s stubbornness, but although he knew the tyrant’s *arrogance* [emphasis added] was worthy of sudden destruction, nevertheless little by little he used heavier punishments against him by which Pharaoh might have been corrected if he had not resisted by his own ill will. But the divine leniency provoked his impious mind even more. God, therefore, turned Pharaoh’s evil into his own glory. I could say more things on God’s behalf, but God hates all *arrogance*. However, what is more *arrogant* than a man (than which nothing is more lowly) disputing with God as if he were contending with an equal? . . . If it is monstrous *arrogance* for the clay to argue with its creator, is it not greater *arrogance* for a man to dispute about the purposes of God which are so far above us that we are scarcely able to grasp a shadow or a dream of them?

According to Erasmus, the differentiating factor lies in a person’s faith or arrogance, implying that there is humility in faith or there is no faith at all. Arrogance is considered the root of disbelief and rebellion against the God of mercy. Thus, Paul admonishes his own Jewish people not to be astonished when the Gentiles, previously profane and strangers to God, are now elected to God’s kingdom by the merit of their *faith*. Even as Erasmus asserts the necessity of faith in one’s justification through the mercy of God, yet unlike Luther, he insists that this faith is not devoid of human will, either in humble dependency or arrogant disbelief.

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100 Gen. 28:18-22. Cf. 35:1-7; also Gen. 33:20. Building an altar and calling on the name of the Lord is the key demonstration of Abraham and Isaac’s active faith in God (Gen. 12:7, 8; 13:4, 18; 22:9; 26:25).
102 Cf. Ex. 10:3 and 18:11 for the arrogance of Pharaoh.
104 Ibid., 57.
Similarly to his contemporaries among the Reformers, Casper Olevian emphasizes faith in his reading of Romans. A noteworthy insight on Romans 9 is his perspective that predestination covers much more than individual destiny, particularly with the doctrine of election. His view of election is more from the standpoint of God’s overall plan for the elect. It is altogether Christocentric, redemptive and holistic. Olevian sees a threefold purpose in the doctrine of God’s predestination: a) the humility and mortification of the flesh, b) the assurance of salvation in that God’s decree will not be changed, c) and God’s glorification by His goodness, since He has freed us from condemnation with such great grace and elected us by the faith that He has given.

Martin Bucer is regarded as one of the important sixteenth-century Reformers in Germany. His contribution to the reading of predestination in Romans 9 stands out for

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105 Such as Calvin, Luther, Bucer and Erasmus.
106 Olevian is a significant German Reformed theologian during the Protestant Reformation. He is a major figure in the development of Reformed covenant theology during the late sixteenth century, largely on the basis of two systematic works, Expositio Symboli Apostolici (1576) and De Substantia Foederis (1585). See Olevianus, A Firm Foundation: An Aid to Interpreting the Heidelberg Catechism, trans. and ed. Lyle D. Bierma (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1995), xxviii.
107 For Olevian, faith is both an “assent” to God and a “gift” from God (Clark, Caspar Olevian and the substance of the Covenant, 153). Olevian believes that it is not the virtue of one’s faith that is efficacious; rather faith is the instrument by which one apprehends the promise of Christ’s alien righteousness (justitia aliena) (ibid., 155); cf. Olevian, In Epistolam D. Pauli Apostoli Ad Romanos Notae (Geneae: Apud Eustathium Vignon., 1579), 376, 427-28, 431.
108 Cf. Acts 20:32. Olevian expounds God’s election primarily through the eternal and immutable decree of God, whereby He sets forth the elect to be delivered from sin and death with the promise of grace through the death of Abraham’s seed, the λόγος incarnate (ibid., 424). Furthermore, he maintains that the elect are set forth with the purpose of conforming to the image of Christ (ibid., 371).
109 Olevian maintains that sanctification is a key part of predestination because he understands that the life of the elect should be a life of sanctification through the constant and unfailing grace of the Spirit. The elect may thereby persevere in faith and through faith until the consummation of glory in the full adoption of the elect as God’s children in the only-begotten Son and the Heir of all things, Christ, in His heavenly kingdom (ibid., 424-25, 440).
110 Olevian could have been influenced by Calvin’s theology of repentance, which includes mortification and vivification as its essential components. Cf. Calvin, Romans, 6:11, 229.
111 He speaks of the immutable counsel and decree of God in God’s predestination of the elect to be conformed to Christ’s image (Olevian, Romanos, 371). The eternal and immutable decree of God’s will is that which called us according to His purpose, which cannot be frustrated (ibid., 377-79; cf. also 424).
112 Ibid., 440.
113 Bucer was a reformer in the Rhineland.
his treatment of the two topics of faith and free will. First, as Bucer speaks of election, faith connects to the sanctification process of the Christian life. “People have been elected in order to believe and to be holy, in order to be drawn to Christ and as sons of God to be conformed to the image of the Son. The process begins in this life, but will be completed hereafter.” In faith, the elect are drawn to God’s mercy by the gentle persuasion of the Holy Spirit and by the convincing promises of God in Christ. As to why the Jewish people had missed the purpose of God’s election, Bucer states that they did not truly know the mercy of God and had failed to embrace Christ—the perfection of the Law—in faith, instead relying on their own strength in the observance of the Law.

Second, Bucer asserts that free will is limited and it only pertains to matters of civil life and not to the spiritual things of God, such as the worship of God. Although Scripture testifies that God acts in us and moves upon our will to act, it does not exclude the actions of secondary causes through providence. Bucer’s particular understanding of free

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114 Bucer’s discussion of predestination is largely limited to the commentaries, where he expounds the text of scripture. See William Peter Stephens, “The Place of Predestination in Zwingli and Bucer,” Zwingliana Reformiertes Erbe, Band 19 (1992), 409.


117 Bucer, Romanos, 460.

118 Ibid., 434.

119 When Bucer asserts that free will is limited, he cites Romans 7, which asserts that though human choice exists, it is one thing to will the good and another thing to carry it out (ibid., 461). Accordingly, Bucer concludes that the reprobate and the hardened are rejected based on their own will. Thus God’s judgment in His predestination against them is necessary and free from blame (ibid., 449-455).

120 Ibid., 461.

121 Bucer states that according to our human nature there can be no true worship of God, even if one is able to choose, unless that person is born again (ibid.). Olevian adds, “Whatever free-will is attributed to men, everyone agrees that, without a special impulse, and the perpetuity of the act of the spirit of God, men will not have been able to turn themselves to God, nor are they converted and persist in the life of God” (ibid., 464, cf. 466).

122 In the “necessities” of life such as hunger and thirst, there is no choice but to eat and drink in order to stay alive. In the misfortunes of life such as torture, sickness, death or destruction, Bucer contends that there is no free will (ibid.).
will qualifies his reading of Romans 9:16-21. In his discussion of whether humans are endowed with free will, Bucer first looks at the Greek term ἀυτεξούσιον, which is defined as “the power to act on one’s own discretion without being forced by another.” Scripturally, referring to both Augustine and Aquinas, Bucer maintains that our free will does exist but still needs to be brought under the command of the “God-given invariability and necessity of doing right.” Bucer shows a perceptive disparity with Luther’s position on the total bondage of the human will. His understanding of human choice is more in line with the early Church Fathers and medieval theologians’ approach.

Peter Martyr Vermigli was an Italian theologian of the sixteenth century, later active as a Reformer in England and on the continent. His interest in how predestination is understood in Romans 9 differs to some extent from that of Calvin and Luther, in that he dwells more on the positive and moral side of predestination and foreknowledge. In response to Pighius’ charge of fatalistic determinism, Vermigli writes, “What we are saying, if God hath predestinated us unto salvation, by believing, we will pay attention to live well . . . and with the help of God, it is only right (or we ought to desire) that we shall believe, as well as to live rightly.” Even if the responsibility of the elect is to believe and give attention to living rightly, all together it is God, as the Potter, who predestines the elect through His foreknowledge to be conformed to the image of His Son. Without God’s guidance and

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123 Bucer, Romanos, 460.
124 Ibid., 460-61. Lugioyo, Martin Bucer’s Doctrine of Justification, 72.
125 He was a prominent Roman Catholic theologian who became one of the formative theologians of the sixteenth-century Reformation.
126 A Dutch Catholic theologian during the 16th century.
127 Pietro Martire Vermigli, In Epistolam S. Pauli Apostoli Ad Romanos Commentarii (Basileae Apud Petrum Pernam, 1560), 934, 951.
128 Ibid., 935; cf. 940.
preparation, Vermigli believes that the elect cannot attain salvation by their own efforts. It is only by God’s foreknowledge and His eternal counsel, rather than by chance or prejudice.

Another facet of Vermigli’s positive reading of predestination in Romans 9 is his clarification of God’s foreknowledge. First, Vermigli describes God’s knowledge as more extensive in its operation than His foreknowledge, “for the knowledge is extended not only to the present, past, and future, but also to all those that have never come to pass.” However, God’s foreknowledge is the knowledge of His will which goes before us in that God foresees “the things that He wants to be put right,” and then directs His will by natural providence towards the fulfillment of His predestination. On the contrary, not all of those whom God foreknows He predestines, since He foresees the reprobate whom he knows to be worthy of condemnation, but does not predestine them to be reprobated. For the reprobates are condemned by the inclination and fruit of their own hearts. Vermigli further claims that nowhere in the Bible is predestination used in the context of condemning the reprobate. Above all, Vermigli’s positive view of predestination concludes by highlighting the fact that the chief effect of predestination is Christ Himself, because not a single one of God’s gifts has been chosen without being transmitted by means of our Saviour and consummated with

129 Vermigli quotes I Cor. 2:9 to explain his point, yet he mistakenly attributes this verse to the epistle to the Ephesians (ibid., 936).
130 Ibid., 936; cf. Vermigli, Predestination and Justification: Two Theological Loci (Kirksville, MO: Truman State University Press, 2003), 19.
131 Ibid., 937; cf. Vermigli, Predestination and Justification, 16-17.
132 Ibid., 938; cf. Vermigli, Predestination and Justification, 17. Zwingli is another Reformer who focuses more on the doctrine of providence, which he sees as the mother of predestination (Stephens, Zwingli and Bucer, 393). Zwingli further writes, “For the whole business of predestination, free will, and merit rests upon this matter of providence” (ibid., 395).
133 Vermigli, Romanos, 938.
134 Ibid., 944. In his book Predestination and Justification, Vermigli asserts that Scriptures only use predestination “with reference to the elect alone” (16).
our conformity to the image of Christ.\textsuperscript{135} Clearly, Vermigli’s reading of predestination and foreknowledge is more influenced by Patristic writers such as Augustine, Jerome, Origen and Cyprian,\textsuperscript{136} and it is more in line with the medieval theologian Aquinas than with the Geneva Reformers.

Another influential Swiss theologian of the sixteenth century Reformation is Heinrich Bullinger. According to Bullinger, Romans is primarily to be understood as a whole, in reference to the Old Testament covenantal promise of the Gospel of Christ and a strong testament of God’s faithfulness.\textsuperscript{137} No other contemporary Reformed commentaries stress the unity and continuity between the Old and New Testaments as much as Bullinger does. While most Reformed commentaries teach faith as the gift of God, Bullinger relates faith to God’s faithfulness as a whole.\textsuperscript{138} Such a hermeneutic determines how Bullinger reads predestination in the context of Romans 9. With his interpretation of Romans 9-11 on “the rejection of the Jews and the calling of the Gentiles,”\textsuperscript{139} Bullinger steers away from the predestination of the individual either in election or reprobation, in contrast to the interpretations of Luther, Melanchthon, Bucer, Calvin and Beza.\textsuperscript{140} Thus he sees the hardening of Pharaoh’s heart as representative of all humanity rather than just Pharaoh alone. Bullinger believes that Paul writes this letter not so much as a theologian presenting an abstract doctrine of the decree of God, but rather as a pastor bringing comfort and admonition to his own congregation, while sharing as well a message of comfort and warning to the Gentile believers.\textsuperscript{141}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[135] Ibid., 974; cf. Vermigli’s definition of predestination (Vermigli, \textit{Predestination and Justification}, 19).
\item[136] Ibid., 962.
\item[137] Peter Opitz, “Bullinger on Romans,” in \textit{Reformation Readings of Romans}, 155-56.
\item[138] Ibid., 155.
\item[139] “\textit{Reiectio Iudaeorum et vocazione gentium}” (Ibid., 153).
\item[140] Ibid., 156.
\item[141] Ibid., 156-57.
\end{footnotes}
In his reading of Romans 9-11, Bullinger holds to the theme of God’s faithfulness; because God is faithful, His nature and His will are unchangeable. On the other hand, the Scripture also teaches that the desire of God’s heart is not the death of sinners but their true repentance. Similarly to Melanchthon, Bullinger appeals to God’s “universal promises.” He further admonishes against “debating scrupulously on the secret judgment of God.” Therefore, he questions whether probing into what God has decided to do from eternity past should be our business or not. God does not act like a tyrant according to the motto: “Sic volo, sic iubeo.” Rather, it is in accordance with God’s faithfulness that all whom He saves are saved out of pure grace. However, God does not condemn anyone without wickedness on his or her part. In the hardening of Pharaoh’s heart, God’s kindness is the “causa sine qua non,” but not the “causa efficiens” because His kindness is anchored deep in His attribute of longsuffering, which Paul proclaims. It is differentiated from the promptings of cause and effect. Bullinger is said to have reproved Calvin for being too speculative: “I certainly would not dare to speak thus. For I would judge that the sincerity of divine grace must be defended. We should therefore not say that God creates man for destruction, and leads him to that end, or impels him by hardening or blinding him.” Thus, Bullinger refuses to say that eternal reprobation is logically correlated to election.

142 Holtrop. The Bolsec Controversy, 811. Melanchthon takes seriously the “universal” texts of Scripture—including Jn. 6:40, Matt.11:28, Jn. 3:16, Rom. 3:22, 10:12, and 1 Tim. 2:4. In his discussion of these texts, Melanchthon maintains that humans have freedom and responsibility, which God does not abolish. “Salvation is a gift, but it is not a gift if forced upon man.” He then quotes Chrysostom: “God draws, but he draws those who are willing” (ibid., 807, 809).
143 “Thus I wish, thus I command.”
144 Opit, Bullinger on Romans, 157.
145 Holtrop. The Bolsec Controversy, 60-61, cf. 89.
146 Ibid., 810.
Bullinger was not alone; other theologians from Basel also appealed for biblical moderation especially in discussing predestination.¹⁴⁷

**Summary**

The readings of Romans 9 by the early Church Fathers extend their influence to the sixteenth-century Reformed theologians and their interpretations, even as they reshaped the doctrine of predestination. The Reformed commentaries discussed in the context of this chapter regard Romans 9-11, particularly 9:6-13, 17-18, and 21-23, as providing the scriptural foundation for a doctrine of predestination which highlights God’s election of the individual to salvation. Surprisingly, only a minority of these Reformers identify with Calvin in insisting on a strict double predestination of election to salvation and reprobation to eternal damnation. Even then, they place lesser emphasis on the deterministic view of reprobation as compared to the logical consequences of Calvin’s absolute decree. In the controversy between the sixteen-century Reformers and Rome, the debate concerns whether the source of divine election is the immutable decree of God alone or whether election follows foreseen merit. While the key Reformers believe election comes solely from the divine predestinating will, there are numerous Reformers who are akin to their Catholic counterparts in holding the inseparability of foreknowledge and predestination. For example, Vermigli dwells on the ethical and positive side of predestination, whereby he explains that God’s will is directed by providence towards what God has foreseen; and as a result, He predestines the things He wants to put right for the elect. He also states that God does not predestine the reprobate to damnation. On the contrary, Erasmus sees that it is unnecessary to use God’s foreknowledge to explain human choice as related to divine predestination. While Bullinger believes that

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¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 61.
God’s predestination encompasses His counsel, he warns against being too speculative in probing into the secret judgments of God. At the same time, he pleads for modesty and sensitivity toward biblical simplicity.

Another debate that exists within the Reformed circle is the discussion of faith and free will. The key Reformers proclaim faith as a free gift of God, which is the sole basis upon which sinners are justified before the righteous God, without any claim to their own merit or good works. On the other hand, there are Reformers such as Bucer and Olevian who view faith not so much as a free gift of God, but rather as an assent to God’s calling and a response to the grace of God’s election. For Bucer, whose commentaries were held in high regard by Calvin, faith can be described economically, such that faith is not only an affirmation of mind and heart in responding and consenting to what God has said, but also a starting point for the sanctification process in the election of grace. Likewise, Olevian emphasizes the economic side of faith, and his reading of predestination is not focused on individual destiny but on God’s overall plan for the elect, thus providing a more Christocentric perspective. Accordingly, the aforementioned Reformers understand human will differently from Luther’s staunch conviction regarding the total depravity of human will. These readings range from Bucer’s qualified (or limited) free will to Bullinger’s concurrence with Erasmus regarding his strong reservations about ascribing election in Romans 9:6-29 solely to the will of God,\(^{148}\) without the participation of human will.

The contribution made by the sixteenth-century Reformed interpretations of Romans may be unmatchable, but the diversities and controversies between theologians at that time present to us a clearer picture of what the Reformed hermeneutical and theological landscape is really like. The different interpretations and Reformed readings of divine predestination

and its correlated topics are not in unison or presented with equal emphases. Generally, Luther and Calvin are known to be in the forefront, perhaps due to their extensive published writings, which have represented the Reformed voice of that period ever since. However, in highlighting the doctrinal expositions and positions of these well-known Reformers, we must be cautious not to disregard the writings and commentaries of other Reformed theologians. Certainly a review of their works opens up fascinating new dimensions that invite open and beneficial conversations. If done rightly, we shall then concur: “Reading Romans in the wake of the tradition of the Reformation cannot but result in diversity—which is at the heart of any lively conversation over interpretation.”

The interpretive choices and theological presuppositions from the Reformation continue to directly or indirectly provoke much-needed contemporary conversations about, and reorientations of, Romans 9.

**The Modern Hermeneutics: Essential Perspectives in the Modern Reorientation of Romans**

The modern New Testament scholars’ and theologians’ critical examination of the Reformation’s interpretation of Romans has reawakened the twentieth-century focus on this epistle of Paul on its own terms. Obviously, there are many New Testament scholars who adopt the Reformed interpretation of this letter. However, post-Reformation commentaries, such as that of John Locke, and the hermeneutical theories of the last two centuries have instigated much rethinking about the reading of Romans. In addition, the expositions of Sanders and Dunn on covenantal law and Judaism during the intertestamental period have brought about a “new perspective on Paul” that has had a significant impact on the

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149 Ehrensperger, “Conclusion: Reformers in Conversation over Romans,” 199.
interpretation of Romans.¹⁵² These studies have set in motion a renewed interest in
reassessing the interpretation of the account of Romans in light of the contexts and
circumstances of Paul and his readers, especially the relationships between the Jewish and
Gentile Christian communities with regard to Torah and Jewish particularism. Without
simply reasserting the Reformation interpretation, this new perspective (and others following
in its wake)¹⁵³ has driven a reorientation in both the interpretation and the theological
presentation of Paul within this epistle, particularly chapters 9-11. What then are these
essential perspectives in our modern reorientation of Romans that might be beneficial in
“hope of recovering the most likely senses that Paul and his first-century readers would have
shared?”¹⁵⁴

The first perspective in the reorientation of the interpretation of Romans is the context
of God’s covenantal choice of Israel. In order to understand Paul’s heartbeat in writing this
epistle, one must take into consideration the Jewish heritage and Old Testament covenantal
context of Paul’s writing (Rom. 11: 25-27). Before Sanders’ major contribution toward a
new perspective on Paul’s writings, there were already publications in Pauline studies¹⁵⁵ that
invited an interpretation where Paul was no longer presented as antinomian (cf. Acts 21:24,
24:14b) and Judaism was no longer viewed as a religious practice where righteousness was
attained by keeping laws. Through the eyes of Luther and the Reformers, it was normative to

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¹⁵² Specifically, Paul disputes the distorted representation of the Law and the concept of “Judaism” endorsed by
both the unbelieving zealous Jews (Rom. 2; 10:2) and the Judaizers (Acts 15:1-2; Gal. 2).
¹⁵³ Ehrensperger, “The New Perspective and Beyond,” Modern Interpretations of Romans: Tracking Their
Hermeneutical / Theological Trajectory, ed. Cristina Grenholm (New York: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2013),
191-219.
¹⁵⁴ Holder, “Romans in the Light of Reformation Reception,” 4.
¹⁵⁵ As early as the post-Reformation in the seventeenth century, John Lightfoot led the way “in the investigation
of the relationship between New Testament and rabbinic writings” (Wainwright, “Introduction,” in Locke,
Paraphrase, 13). Much influenced by Lightfoot, Locke in the early eighteenth century also gave detailed
attention to the Jewish background in his Paraphrase of the Epistles of Paul (ibid.). These writings are
considered to be the precursors to the “new perspective” on Paul’s epistles in the twentieth century.
see the doctrine of justification by faith as the heart of Romans. The new perspective on Paul’s writing maintains that “the Faith and Works controversy has obtained an undue emphasis through our reading of Paul in the light of the soul-strivings of Luther.”  

In his book *Paul and His Interpreters* (1911), Albert Schweitzer examines Pauline studies outside the context of Reformation interpretations and traces the development of Judaism, wherein he suggests a distinction between Semitic Judaism and Hellenistic Judaism. He further proposes that Paul’s concepts and thoughts are rooted in Semitic eschatology rather than Hellenistic Judaism, and that therefore one should avoid reading him from the Hellenistic perspective. This proposal shows that Paul’s affirmation of the Old Testament Law and his understanding of the Old Testament covenant is spiritual rather than cultural or philosophical. In 1914, Montefiore in his book *Judaism and St. Paul* follows Schweitzer’s dichotomy between Semitic and Hellenistic Judaism and demonstrates that Paul was not as anti-Jewish as might seem. In 1927, Moore in his *First Centuries of the Christian Era* maintains that the Judaism of Paul’s day was not purely law- and merit-oriented (*Lohnordnung*); rather, it was also characterized by free grace and the love of God.

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158 Ibid., 36. “Since all [Paul’s] conceptions and thoughts are rooted in eschatology, those who labour to explain him on the basis of Hellenism, are like a man who should bring water from a long distance in leaky watering-cans in order to water a garden lying beside a stream” (ibid., 140).

Comparing Judaism and Christianity, Moore states, “If the one is grace, so is the other.”

In 1948, Davies’s volume *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism* basically refuted Montefiore’s theory that Paul’s religious background was the “poorer” or “unorthodox” religion of Hellenistic Judaism. Davies believes that Paul was a Pharisee in good standing with such great representatives of rabbinic religion as Gamaliel, and he appeals to 2 Cor. 11:22 and Phil. 3:5-6 to authenticate Paul’s Jewish background. Essentially, Davies contends that Montefiore placed a wall between Palestinian (*Semitic*) Judaism and Diaspora (*Hellenistic*) Judaism that did not exist. Davies believes that there was frequent interaction between the Jews in Jerusalem and the Jews of the Diaspora. In 1950, Schoeps likewise contributed to the discussion by studying and explaining Paul’s theology from the standpoint of his rabbinical background. He agrees with Schweitzer and Davies as to the cessation of the law’s operation in the Messianic age, yet he departs from them (agreeing with Montefiore) in arguing that Paul’s negative view of the law can be explained by his Hellenistic background, which resulted in a type of Judaism seen in the Septuagint and in Philo.

In 1977, Sanders made a major contribution in this area with his new perspective on Paul’s writings, wherein he proposes the model of “covenantal nomism.” In his book

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161 Ibid., 2:95.
163 William David Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism: Some Rabbinic Elements in Pauline Theology* (London: SPCK, 1955), 2-8 (cited in Thielman, *From Plight to Solution*, 9). “Most important of all, Davies maintained that Paul was not at odds with Judaism either in its Hellenistic or rabbinic form; his belief in Christ was the fulfillment of his Jewish heritage” (ibid., 10).
165 “Covenantal nomism is the view that one’s place in God’s plan is established on the basis of the covenant and that the covenant requires as a proper response of man his obedience to its commandments, while providing means of atonement for transgression” (Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 75).
Paul and Palestinian Judaism, Sanders continues the discussions of Schweitzer, Montefiore, and Davies and argues that Paul represents neither Rabbinic nor Apocalyptic Judaism. He believes that Paul’s view of Judaism is expressed in terms of covenantal nomism. Nevertheless, he agrees with Moore that first-century Judaism was not a meritorious religion devoid of grace and forgiveness. Sanders’ close examination of the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Apocrypha, and the Pseudepigrapha reveals a pattern of covenantal nomism, in which salvation is assumed until blatant defiance of the covenant places one outside God’s elect people. Forgiveness for sin is generously provided by atoning sacrifice and by God’s merciful character; and salvation is never based on the merits of performance or on human effort. Furthermore, according to Sanders, one of the most striking themes of the Qumran literature is that of predestination. On the subject of predestination, God is said to be solely responsible for choosing who is in the covenant from eternity. In conjunction with predestination is the doctrine of election, specifically referring to the election of Israel by God as a chosen race, which had become the basis of Jewish religion, even though it was presented in the form of nationalism. Sanders takes the position that in the Book of Jubilees, the idea of election is not a privilege of a limited few, but “the gift of the covenant God to his people, the Israelites.” Although Israel is the elect and holy nation of God through the covenant, there still will be people who will turn aside and loathe the way of the ordinance.

166 Ibid., 5-7, 15f., 157, 269, 375f., 421f., 515-518.  
167 Sanders, Paul and Palestinian Judaism, 269, 375-383, 419-422; cf. Thielman, From Plight to Solution, 16.  
168 Ibid., 257-8.  
171 Sanders, Paul and Palestinian Judaism, 261, 362.
However, for the Jews, the perception of election was bound up with one’s commitment to the law, which forms the motivating force behind their national instinct. Despite the fact that the covenant was not earned, obedience to the commandments was the individual responsibility of each member of the covenant community, given the prior election of Israel by God.\textsuperscript{172} In other words, the free election of God must go hand in hand with individual responsibility. According to Enns, especially in the Book of Jubilees, election is by grace but salvation is by obedience. “‘Being in’ is by birth; it is nationalistic. Staying in, however, is a matter of individual effort.”\textsuperscript{173} Hence, Paul did not see grace and merit as mutually exclusive.\textsuperscript{174}

In spite of the relevance (even complexity\textsuperscript{175}) of the Jewish concept and interpretation of the doctrine of election according to their traditions and the Old Testament Scriptures, rarely do Christian writers in the Early Church period, the Middle Ages or the Reformation era ever make reference to or engage these resources. For example, in Augustine’s disputation with the Manicheans and especially the Pelagians, he directs his attention to an intense study of the writings of the apostle Paul, particularly the Epistle to the Romans, rather than the Jewish writings in the intertestamental period. In fact, in his \textit{Institutes}, Calvin does not differentiate between God’s covenant with Israel and the New Covenant, and he states:

\begin{quote}
\textquote{Tell them that this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: ‘Cursed is the one who does not obey the terms of this covenant—the terms I commanded your ancestors when I brought them out of Egypt, out of the iron-smelting furnace.’ I said, ‘Obey me and do everything I command you, and you will be my people, and I will be your God’ (Jer. 11:3, 4).}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{172} Enns, Peter. “Expansion of Scripture,” I.98.

\textsuperscript{173} Although O’Brien insists that according to Paul, grace and works are mutually exclusive when it comes to the ground and instrument of justification, yet he agrees that faith and work are not mutually exclusive (Peter T. O’Brien, “Was Paul a Covenantal Nomist?” \textit{Justification and Variegated Nomism}, II.269-70). Sanders further suggests that in the Qumran texts, the idea of God's electing grace was not formulated in opposition to man’s freedom of choice (1QH 6.5-10; 1QS 9.14—Sanders, 261-62).

\textsuperscript{174} Sanders notes that the Qumran assumptions about election are remarkably complex and do not necessarily lend themselves to a unified system (Sanders, \textit{Paul and Palestinian Judaism}, 265-66). Cf. Markus Bockmuehl, “IQS and Salvation at Qumran,” \textit{Justification and Variegated Nomism}, I.396.
The children of the promise [Rom. 9:8], reborn of God, who have obeyed the commands by faith working through love [Gal. 5:6], have belonged to the New Covenant since the world began . . . all the saints whom Scripture mentions as being peculiarly chosen of God from the beginning of the world have shared with us the same blessing unto eternal salvation.\textsuperscript{176}

As Calvin maintains that the New Covenant has its application to the election of individuals,\textsuperscript{177} we can understand why individualism has been ascribed to the theology of the sixteenth-century Reformation. However, Sanders notes here that Paul was not working out the theologies of individual salvation that were espoused in the medieval and Reformation-era theological interpretations of election, but rather was working within a framework that understood God’s gift of the covenant from the context of Judaism and the Old Testament witness.

The second perspective in the reorientation of the interpretation of Romans concerns the framework of \textit{wholeness} in God’s redemptive plan, not just individual salvation.\textsuperscript{178} This \textit{wholeness} includes both dimensions of cosmic restoration and a “widened covenant.”\textsuperscript{179} In the Reformation period, the cosmic dimension of salvation is minimized, owing to the emphasis on individual and spiritual salvation, which is seen in purely eschatological terms.\textsuperscript{180} Yet for Paul, God’s redemption is comprehensive in that cosmic salvation is closely connected to God’s overall purpose in transforming the fallen world in accordance

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item[176] \textit{Inst.}, II.11.10. However, Calvin points out that the Old Testament has relevance for one nation, Israel, while the New Testament declares the calling of the Gentiles from all nations (ibid., II.11.11-12). Therefore, the doctrine of election no longer specifically refers to the election of Israel by God as a chosen race, as presented in the form of nationalism, a holy nation of God (ibid., III.21.5). Rather, the election of individuals should be reckoned as actual election (ibid., III. 21.7).
\item[177] Ibid., III. 21.7.
\item[178] See Khiok-Khng Yeo, “Messianic Predestination in Romans 8 and Classical Confucianism,” \textit{Navigating Romans Through Cultures}, 269.
\item[179] Ehrensperger, “The New Perspective and Beyond,” in \textit{Modern interpretations of Romans}, 197. Käsemann in his commentary on Romans anchors the justification and the righteousness of God in the Old Testament. He finds justification by faith to be concentrated not on the individual “but views it as God’s reclaiming the world, thus reflecting the cosmic implications of Paul’s preaching as did Schweitzer.” See John McRay, \textit{Paul: His Life and Teaching} (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003), 444.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
with the prophets of the Old Testament\textsuperscript{181} and the apostles of the New Testament,\textsuperscript{182} all of whom speak of this cosmic “salvation.” Specifically, the apostle in his discourse on the hope of cosmic (πᾶσα ἡ κτίσις, “whole creation”) restoration in Romans 8:18-25 describes the coming deliverance of the human and natural creation from their present sufferings (8:18) and from the bondage of decay (8:21) under the weight of sin, and he states that both human and natural creation would be brought into His glorious kingdom. The wholeness of God’s redemption includes the restoration of both people and the natural world from all the disorders, destruction and deprivation brought about by the fall of the human race.\textsuperscript{183} Peter’s speech in Acts 3 affirms as well such a cosmic restoration\textsuperscript{184} at the second coming of Christ.

God’s restoration of all things that have been corrupted by evil is comprehensive, and it is inaugurated and accomplished through the cross and resurrection of Jesus.\textsuperscript{185} If all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, are reconciled through the blood of Christ shed on the cross, then it is the wholeness, the totality of creation, that shares in God’s redemptive plan. The restoration of God’s total creation is summarized in Rev. 21:5, “I am making everything new.” This is the jubilation of salvation for all in Christ, and it is also the triumphant hope of all creation. Therefore, for Paul, the power of the Gospel is not only the justification of sinners by faith, but also the restoration of the whole creation through the power of the Holy Spirit of God.

Furthermore, the wholeness in God’s redemptive plan includes the widening of God’s covenant. Dunn sees that Paul’s concern lies in having the right understanding and

\textsuperscript{182} Acts 3:21; Rom. 8:18-25; 1 Cor. 10:26; Eph. 1:10, 23; Col. 1: 15-20; Rev. 21:5.
\textsuperscript{183} Could Paul also be hinting at some primordial cosmic disorder brought about by the fall of spiritual creatures besides the fall of Adam (Rom. 5:12)?
\textsuperscript{184} Acts 3:21—ἀχρι χρόνων ἀποκαταστάσεως πάντων, “until the time comes for God to restore everything.”
\textsuperscript{185} Acts 3:21; Eph. 1:10, 23; Col. 1: 18-20.
application of the Law, not the Law *per se*. The apostle treats the concept of “being justified” as thoroughly Jewish,\(^{186}\) yet this understanding should not be something that distinguishes the Jews from the Gentiles. Both Jews and Gentiles are “sinners” in need of “being justified.”\(^{187}\) Rather, justification has to do with God’s gracious covenant in saving His people, Jews and Gentiles alike. The problem that Paul sees then lies with a narrow Judaistic view of the Abrahamic covenant, and a misappropriation of the Mosaic Law.

Dunn’s analysis is based on his reading of Gal. 2:16, where he identifies the “real” problem that Paul has with Judaism, namely the *observation of the law*, which distinguishes the Jewish identity from that of the Gentiles. Their departure from God’s set purpose had turned the practice of circumcision and the observation of the food laws, feast days and Sabbath into an ethnocentric, nationalistic and salvific marker. “In other words, Paul has in view precisely what Sanders calls ‘covenantal nomism.’ And what Paul denies is that God’s justification depends on ‘covenantal nomism,’ that God’s grace extends only to those who wear the badge of the covenant.”\(^{188}\) In contrast to the righteousness understood in terms of the works of the Law, Paul speaks of righteousness through a covenantal faith in Jesus Christ, which is intended to extend the covenantal blessings to the non-Jewish nations.\(^{189}\) Hence, through

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\(^{186}\) Dunn’s assertion can be drawn from Isa. 43:9 and 45:25. Dunn also distinguishes three stages in God’s justification: “whether that is an initial acknowledgment, or a repeated action of God (God’s saving acts), or his final vindication of his people. So in Gal. 2.16 we are not surprised when the second reference to being justified has a future implication (‘we have believed in Christ Jesus in order that we might be justified . . .’), and the third reference is in the future tense (‘by works of law no flesh shall be justified’). We might mention also Gal. 5.5, where Paul speaks of ‘awaiting the hope of righteousness.’ ‘To be justified’ in Paul cannot, therefore, be treated simply as an entry or initiation formula; nor is it possible to draw a clear line of distinction between Paul’s usage and the typically Jewish covenant usage” (Dunn, *The New Perspective on Paul*, 97-98).

\(^{187}\) Rom. 3:9, 24; 5:1, 9; Gal. 2:16; cf. ibid., 97. Judaism regarded the Gentiles as “sinners” because they neither know nor keep the law given by God to Israel (ibid.).


\(^{189}\) Ibid., 102. In brief, Dunn argues: “From the beginning, God’s eschatological purpose in making the covenant had been the blessing of the nations: the gospel was already proclaimed when God promised Abraham, ‘In you shall all the nations be blessed’ (Gal. 3:8; Gen. 12.3; 18.18). So, now that the time of fulfillment had come, the covenant should no longer be conceived in nationalistic or racial terms. No longer is it an exclusively Jewish qua Jewish privilege. The covenant is not thereby abandoned. Rather it is broadened out
Christ, Paul calls his readers’ attention to the original intention of God’s covenant with Abram, which is now widened to include Gentiles. The cross of Jesus Christ has visibly demonstrated that He is the fulfillment of God’s purpose regarding the covenant.

The third perspective in the reorientation of the interpretation of Romans is the perspective of *grace-centered* encouragement instead of decree-centered judgment, particularly in the context of predestination. It is interesting how contemporary scholars are recovering, not replicating, the theme of grace underscored by the medieval writers: William of St. Thierry, Peter Abelard and Thomas Aquinas. Barth picks up the theme of the divine movement of grace in his reading of Romans. In his *Shorter Commentary on Romans*, Barth writes:

> The whole of Chapter 8 will teach us how the condemnation of man has been abrogated. God meets that bending and breaking of his Law by establishing it anew and more than ever as his Law in Jesus Christ, by obtaining for it due respect and observance through Jesus Christ and thereby making his grace triumphant with and for everyone who believes in Jesus Christ.

In his *CD*, Barth further states that God’s decision in Jesus Christ is a gracious decision and He executes it in His movement towards us with His covenant of grace. He notes that grace “reflects the being of God as we have hitherto sought to understand and explain it.”

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**Footnotes:**

189 Kant’s focus on moral responsibility has limited his concept of grace to a certain extent. Kant argues against “cheap grace” before Bonhoeffer does. He believes that no one can expect God’s grace without being morally obligated. “Kant emboldened theologians to think in new ways about ‘radical evil’ and the need for ‘regeneration’ – issues central to Paul and specifically to Romans . . . [he] invited the Christological or grace-centered alternative that . . . reached maximum expression in Barth and Rahner” (Eugene TeSelle, “How Kant Influenced Modern Theological Readings of Romans,” *Modern Interpretation of Romans*, 35). See also Yeo, “Messianic Predestination in Romans 8 and Classical Confucianism,” 268.


191 *CD* II/2:9-10.
The extent to which the theme of grace determines Barth’s reading is explicitly evident in his *Epistle to the Romans*. Barth embraces and makes use of numerous theological concepts in an effort to organize his commentary around the themes that arise from the context of the text, in which grace is foremost. It is noteworthy how he applies the theme of grace and connects it with a wide range of doctrinal arguments in Romans. According to Barth, grace primarily refers to God’s activity. “Grace is the act of God by which the new man shall be and is, and by which also he is free from sin. Our negative, known, human existence, so little conformed to Jesus, is filled with hope by the positive and secret power of the resurrection.”**194** In his exegesis of Romans 6, specifically verses 1 and 15, Barth deals with the relation between sin and grace with his usual dialectical adroitness. He begins with the qualifying explanation that they are incommensurable.**195** “Sin is related to grace as possibility to impossibility.”**196** Here, Barth asserts that grace is due to the “impossibility” of God, in that it begins with what God has accomplished in the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ. Through Christ’s death on the cross, Barth states:

[T]he negation of every human ‘Yes’ and ‘No’, here and there, ‘not only— but also’, is occasioned by an affirmation by which all dualism, tension, polarity, allogeneity, and antinomy, are excluded. The possibility of sin is therefore confronted, not, as may perhaps have been supposed, by a mere negation, but by a POSITIVE impossibility.**197**

Even the best of humanity breaks into pieces on the impossibility of God. “Precisely there, the invisible truth that before God no flesh is righteous, which may perhaps have remained

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193 *CD* II/2:9.
194 Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, trans. Edwyn C. Hoskyns. (London: Oxford University Press, 1957), 197. The exposition of Barth is different from Luther in that the approach of Barth is more Christocentric (the focus is on Christ and His death) while Luther is more Christian centric (the believers: “we” and “us”) and anthropocentric (“he”, the “old man”, and the “spiritual person”).
195 Ibid.
196 Ibid., 191. Grace is and cannot be human possibility (Barth, *Romans*, 214).
197 Ibid., 201.
invisible from Adam to Moses (5.14), becomes visible. Precisely there, men encounter God; and there breaks forth the KRISIS of God, the sickness unto death.”

Thus Barth remarks, “Grace is not grace, if he that receives it is not under judgment. Righteousness is not righteousness, if it be not reckoned to the sinner.” He further states that “Grace is the divine possibility for men, which robs them, as men, of their own possibilities. Grace is the relating of the visible man to his invisible personality which is grounded in God.”

Moreover, in Christ’s resurrection, God’s impossibility is fully demonstrated and established. Therefore, we understand why Barth claims that “grace is the power of resurrection,” because it begins where “the indicative is here changed to an imperative.”

For Barth, grace is also the work of God’s sanctification. Sanctification is not about doing or not doing, just as grace does not mean “that men can or ought to do something, nor that they can or ought to do nothing. Grace means that God does something. Nor does grace mean that God does ‘everything’. Grace means that God does some quite definite thing, not a thing here and a thing there, but something quite definite in men. Grace means that God forgives men their sins.” Furthermore, the work of grace in sanctification is about obedience. In the “new man,” grace begins in the knowledge of the will of God, “and as such it is the willing of the will of God.”

Consider the following:

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198 Ibid., 185-86.
199 Ibid., 187.
200 Ibid., 200.
201 Cf. ibid., 195.
202 Ibid., 206, 207.
203 Ibid. Barth elaborates further: “Grace is the royal and sovereign power of God, the existential presentation of men to God for His disposal, the real freedom of the will of God in men. Grace lies beyond all optimism and also beyond all pessimism. Grace is the power of obedience, because it is human existence in that plane and space and world in which obedience is undeniable and unavoidable, because it is the power of the Resurrection. And grace is the power of the Resurrection because it is the power of death, the power, that is, of the man who has passed from death to life, who has once again found himself because he has lost himself in God and in God alone” (ibid., 213).
204 Ibid., 215.
205 “There is no grace without the lordship and claim of grace” (CD II/2:12).
206 Barth, Romans, 207.
We are therefore compelled to say quite definitely that to possess grace does not mean to be or not to be this or that, or to do or not to do this or that. The possession of grace means the existential submission to God’s contradiction of all that we ourselves are or are not, of all that we do or do not do. ‘Grace possessed’ means that we are presented unto obedience to the contradiction, and that we are His servants. This possession of grace occurs as the impossible possibility of God which is beyond every possibility of our own: it is the freedom which God takes to Himself in us.\textsuperscript{207}

The grace of obedience takes possession of visible life and presents it to righteousness. The grace of obedience is “the existential relation between God and man”\textsuperscript{208} where human beings are bound to “bring sanctification into concrete existence by those same instruments which they have hitherto used to create iniquity.”\textsuperscript{209} Otherwise, grace is not grace if we do not “stretch out towards a sanctified life prepared for and open to the righteousness of God.”\textsuperscript{210}

It is by way of Barth’s reading of grace in Romans that we come to a better appreciation of Paul’s view of the doctrine of election in Romans 9-11. Barth’s use of grace closely follows Paul’s own consideration of the theme of mercy in Romans 9-11.\textsuperscript{211} Concisely, Barth holds that election is not simply an individual affair for this or that man, because it concerns all humanity.\textsuperscript{212} In the reading of Romans 9-11, Barth identifies for us the fact that, while some writers are interested in human destiny and the quantitative development of hope and glory towards the eschaton among the elect, Paul is interested in conformity to Christ and the qualitative movement of grace and mercy towards Christ among the reprobate. While “grace is the impossibility which is possible only in God,”\textsuperscript{213} and no

\textsuperscript{207} Ibid., 216.
\textsuperscript{208} Ibid., 222.
\textsuperscript{209} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{210} Ibid., 223.
\textsuperscript{211} Ibid., 397.
\textsuperscript{212} Ibid., 396-97.
\textsuperscript{213} Ibid., 231.
one can deserve it, grace is the Nevertheless of the divine love to the creature.” God elects us in Christ with His “universal grace” in His freedom. Barth concludes:

And grace, the freedom of the election of grace, means that God does not despair of the creature. Not only does He not despair of it, but in all the riches of His own glory He moves towards it and interests Himself in it . . . God Himself in His freedom has decided that he shall stand, that he shall be saved and not lost, that he shall live and not die.

The fourth perspective in the reorientation of interpretations of Romans derives from the model of frontier reading as an alternative to an imperial reading of the text. In 1863, Colenso wrote a commentary on Romans based on 7 years of missionary experience and many years of careful study of this epistle. In his preface, addressed to his friend Theophilus Shepstone, he writes:

The teaching of the great Apostle to the Gentiles is here applied to some questions, which daily arise in Missionary labours among the heathen, more directly than is usual with those commentators, who have not been engaged personally in such work, but have written from a very different point of view, in the midst of a state of advanced civilization and settled Christianity. Hence they have usually passed by altogether, or only touched very lightly upon, many points, which are of great importance to Missionaries, but which seemed to be of no immediate practical interest for themselves or their readers.

Colenso’s approach to the interpretation of Romans can be considered an earlier version of “frontier-missionary reading” of the text. Therefore his reading of Romans has taken the “purpose” of God’s predestination as directing the elect towards conforming to the image of God’s Son. Regarding the text in 9:13, Colenso comments:

St. Paul is not speaking at all of eternal salvation and perdition, but of the temporal privileges and blessings . . . As to their state in the eternal world,
Ishmael and Esau and their descendants, (among whom we may reckon the Zulus and Kaffirs,) stand on the same level, and will be judged with the same righteous judgment, as others more highly favoured in this world with the means of grace and the hope of glory, as their brethren in the Jewish Church of old, or in the Christian now . . . in the like manner, ‘England has God loved, and Africa has God hated.’ Yet not all English Christians are children of the Light, nor are all African heathens children of Satan; but those, who have received most, shall have most required of them.  

In the late twentieth century, David Chidester proposes a model of frontier-comparative religion as opposed to one of imperial-comparative religion that may be useful for post-colonial hermeneutics, i.e. frontier vs. imperial readings of the Bible.  Hence, Draper suggests that adopting the “frontier-postcolonial” reading of the text provides a better perspective on the Scriptural writers because such a reading takes the context of the “indigenous” people seriously, while the “imperial-colonial” reading of the text imposes

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220 Ibid., 195-96. Colenso’s writings and his interpretation of Romans earned him the label of heretic, and he was excommunicated as an Anglican bishop. Larsen lists the key theological issues questionable in Colenso’s commentary on Romans: adherence to universalization in the scope of the application of justification, which is extended to all humanity (Colenso, Romans, 70, 82, 109), the denial of substitutionary atonement (ibid., 105), the denial of the teaching that there is endless punishment (Ibid., 168, 180), and even his assertion that Calvin’s double predestination is misguided and offensive (ibid., 197). See Larsen, “John William Colenso,” in Reading Romans through the Centuries, 187-204. It is my opinion that Colenso as a missionary had a deep love for the indigenous people, based on his strong conviction that God’s love is meant for all people. Perhaps his style of exposition allowed for others to misread his theological claims and to judge him as Larsen did. This is not to say that I agree with all of his theological suggestions or conclusions. As one reads further in his commentary, some of the concerns about his seeming apostasy are alleviated, especially regarding the universality of justification and the denial of substitutionary atonement. Concerning the “justification extended to all,” Colenso suggests that the “all” may not refer to all human beings, but merely “all believers” as being sinners, whether Jews or Gentiles (Colenso, Romans, 82). Nevertheless, God’s grace is His gift, offered to all humanity so that they may have the opportunity to attain the gift of righteousness. It does not follow that salvation is guaranteed (ibid., 112-13), because justification is through faith in Christ Jesus (ibid., 91). Regarding the atonement, Colenso never uses the word “substitutionary.” In his statement that Jesus never died “instead of us”, Colenso clarifies that “He did die that death for our sakes, but not in our stead” (ibid., 105). Earlier, he explains, “He reconciles [us] to Himself . . . by sending His own dear Son to bear the weight of woe which we deserved, to suffer in our stead, as our substitute, in this way to die for us sinners” (ibid., 88). The key difference in Colenso’s wording here is that Christ “suffered in our stead” not “died in our stead,” but He “died for our sakes.” (Colenso was mistaken in that avt can mean “in place of”; and it is used in both Matt. 20:28 and Mk. 10:45 to explain the earthly ministry of Christ through His death).

221 Chidester defines “frontier” as a zone where cultures are exchanged and understood: “I define a frontier as a zone of contact, rather than a line, a border, or a boundary. By this definition, a frontier is a region of intercultural relations between intrusive and indigenous people. Those cultural relations, however, are also power relations. A frontier zone opens with the contact between two or more previously distinct societies and remains open as long as power relations are unstable and contested, with no one group or coalition able to establish dominance. A frontier zone closes when a single political authority succeeds in establishing its hegemony over the area.” See David Chidester, Savage Systems: Colonialism and Comparative Religion in Southern Africa (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1996), 20-21.
hegemonic “truths” on its readers. Therefore, we need to question whether the epistle of Romans articulated by Paul was an imperialistic one. If the narrative of Christ and the Gospel has a universal appeal to and effect on the Jews and the Gentiles alike by means of grace, and if it is a narrative of God’s love through the cross for all to hear and believe, then it does not have to be seen as imperialistic.

In Romans 9, we find the record of Paul taking the spiritual plight of his people earnestly (Rom. 9:1-3). Moved by his missionary zeal, he experiences a great measure of sorrow and unceasing distress. Paul contemplates the predicament of his own people, who are still separated from the love of God due to their unbelief and rejection of Christ, the Elect of God. As we approach Paul’s view of election and predestination in Romans 9, we need to bear in mind the context wherein God Himself takes the human dilemma seriously with a divine love, as seen through the election of the cross of Christ. One may want to regard this reading more theologically as a “cruciform” reading rather than just a “frontier” reading. Therefore, I will suggest in a subsequent chapter that a “frontier” reading, though it is a breakthrough in reading Romans insofar as it begins with the predicament of humanity, is not an adequate reading model. This is so because our reading of Romans must be in alignment with the covenantal, wholeness and grace-centered reading of this epistle. As an alternative, we need to take a step further and consider a “cruciform” reading in order to see how such a perspective on the interpretation of Romans 9 might provide the most likely meaning that Paul had in his heart for his first-century readers.

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222 Draper, “A ‘Frontier’ Reading of Romans,” 60.
223 Cf. Yeo, “Messianic Predestination in Romans 8 and Classical Confucianism,” 269-70.
224 Cf. “‘Frontier’ readings of the text problematize such hegemonic ‘truths’ because they begin with the questions and practice of the other” (Draper, “A ‘Frontier’ Reading of Romans,” 60).
The Reorientation of Modern Scholarship on Romans 9

As the Reformed theologians and writers established their concept of election with its doctrine of predestination, their approach to Romans 9 was to employ Paul’s discourse in this chapter as a proof text for the development of the Reformed theology of double predestination. Thus Romans 9 remains a locus classicus for the debate surrounding human free will and God’s decretum absolutum. Modern scholarship has sensed the need to make interpretive modifications both from the perspective of the theology of election, as represented by Barth, and from the perspective of the hermeneutics of contextual and historical analysis, typified by such scholars as Dunn, Cranfield, Käsemann, Munck, Sanders, Sanday, Headlam, and Watson. Modern scholarship’s major contributions to the understanding of Romans 9 in reference to the theology of election and doctrine of predestination are recognizable in three areas: the Christocentric emphasis in the theology of election, the covenantal community of Paul’s discourse in Romans 9, and the compassion and mercy of God as a universal mitigating factor for the “hardened,” the “vessels of wrath,” and the “non-elect.”

Christocentric Emphasis in the Theology of Election

One of the crucial issues examined by modern Reformed scholarship is the direction of the divine determination in the doctrine of election. It evaluates the placement of this doctrine in the whole system of theology—whether it be in soteriology or Christology. Notable within the modern scholastic treatment of Romans is Barth’s exposition of the doctrine of election, where Christ is both the Subject and the Object of God’s election—both

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225 There are obviously other modern scholars, including those of Reformed tradition, such as Hendriksen, Moo, Piper and Schreiner, etc.
the electing God and the elect Man.²²⁶ Likewise in the Scriptures, we note how Peter describes Christ as the Elect of God and the elect Man being rejected and considered a reprobate.²²⁷ Barth’s thesis introduces a transformation to the understanding of the Reformed doctrines of election and predestination. For Barth, the election of Christ is not only differentiated from Calvin’s doctrine of double predestination, it is coupled with a universal election in Christ. Instead of being concerned with the destiny of individual human beings, whether of election or of reprobation, Barth chooses to focus on a very distinctive divine ontology in probing the question: “Who is the God who elects?” Barth concludes that this doctrine of election can be concisely stated as “the sum of the gospel.”²²⁸ Hence, the doctrine of eternal double predestination is no longer “the quantitative limitation of God’s action, but its qualitative definition (Kühl).”²²⁹ The Christological focus of the doctrine of election highlights the fact that the being of God is revealed in the predestinating act of Christ on the cross. Thus the election of Israel is not merely an act of divine favor for a particular nation, but is an act of divine preparation of redemption in His self-revelation through the cross.

The primary hermeneutical difference between Reformed writers such as Calvin and Barth is that “Barth interprets Scripture with far greater intensity to his Christocentrism. For him, Jesus Christ is the object of the biblical witness so that Christology is the content of

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²²⁶ CD II/2:3.
²²⁸ CD II/2:3, 13-4, 24, 26.
²²⁹ Barth, Romans, 346. According to Barth, the doctrine of predestination is concerned with God’s righteousness and mercy upheld in vast freedom, rather than with certain humans being elected or rejected by God.
exegesis in a way which Calvin does not hold to.” This is because Calvin’s Christology only grounds the assurance of one’s election.  

Barth states his objection as follows:

How can we have assurance in respect of our own election except by the Word of God? And how can even the Word of God give us assurance on this point if this Word, if Jesus Christ, is not really the electing God, not the election itself, not our election, but only an elected means whereby the electing God — electing elsewhere and in some other way — executes that which he has decreed concerning those whom he has — elsewhere and in some other way — elected?

Thus, election is good news in Barth’s exposition, and not the dreadful news as professed by Calvin (Inst. III.23.7).

Consequently, Barth’s reading of Romans 9 produces refreshing insights and expands new perspectives in this debatable text. First, Barth refuses to see Jacob and Esau as an antithesis of election and rejection, because for him, “God is the God of Esau, because He is the God of Jacob. He is the creator of tribulation, because He is the bringer of help. He rejects, in order that He may elect.” For Barth, “the God of Jacob is also the God of Esau and the exclusion is never absolute — in short, the special election of Jacob does not invalidate the general election of Esau.” Similarly for Moses and Pharaoh, Barth writes: “The purpose of the rejection of Pharaoh could be, and in fact is, identical with that of the election of Moses. Both are servants, not masters: servants of the will of God.”

Furthermore, regarding the vessels of honor and dishonor, Barth contends that classical and

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230 David Gibson, Reading the Decree: Exegesis, Election and Christology in Calvin and Barth (London: T & T Clark, 2009), 195.
231 CD II/2:111; cf. also Gibson, Reading the Decree Exegesis, 195.
232 Mark R. Lindsay, Covenanted Solidarity: The Theological Basis of Karl Barth’s Opposition to Nazi Antisemitism and the Holocaust (New York: Peter Lang, 2001), 224.
233 Barth, Romans, 350; cf. C. E. B. Cranfield, A critical and exegetical commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, vol. 2 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark Limited, 1975), 475, “The Genesis narrative indicates explicitly God’s care for Ishmael... We must not read into Paul’s argument any suggestion that Ishmael, because he is not chosen to play a positive part in the accomplishment of God’s special purpose, is therefore excluded from the embrace of God’s mercy.”
234 Gibson, Reading the Decree, 109.
235 Barth, Romans, 352; cf. also CD II/2:221.
traditional commentators had completely misunderstood the thrust of Paul’s argument by assuming that the analogy of the potter and the clay implies “a juxtaposition of two different purposes of God.”

Second, the doctrine of God and the Christological center of the doctrine of election demands, for Barth, that one look at the election of Israel as a type so that the expression of Israel’s election and rejection in Romans 9 becomes clear. “Barth’s doctrine of God implies, first of all, that he does not hold that Israel’s rejection is a divine damnation, or that God has hardened the Jews in order that they may suffer in disbelief and the Church triumph in faith.”

Rather, the divine decision to elect both Israel and the Gentiles is for mercy, which is sustained and perpetuated by God’s faithfulness, attested in salvation history through the cross of Christ.

**The Covenantal Community of Paul’s Discourse in Romans 9**

Another key contribution of modern scholarship is the reemphasis that God is a God of covenant—that God relates Himself to a community of people through a covenant that invites them to live in His presence and to serve His greater purpose. Latta considers that “the doctrine of covenant should be seen as a corollary of the grander doctrine of election”

... Covenant served as a reminder of Israel’s transgression and judgment (Hos. 8:1) as well

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236 Lindsay, *Covenanted Solidarity*, 221; cf. *CD* II/2:224, “The twofold action of the potter does not by any means take place along parallel lines, in symmetry and equilibrium, so that proceeding from a centre of indifference... God will now accept and now reject... [Rather] His operation εἷς τὴνιν is one thing and His operation εἷς ατικαινίου is another, and they stand in an irreversible sequence and order.”

237 Katherine Sonderegger, *That Jesus Christ was Born a Jew: Karl Barth’s “Doctrine of Israel,”* (University Park, Pa.: Penn State University Press, 1992), 127.

238 “Through love and faithfulness sin is atoned for” (Prov. 16:6).

239 Latta has noted that “Siegel’s postulation that ‘the covenant is the hinge upon which the whole of the biblical conception turns’ seems to be, given the overall Old Testament message, an unwarranted elevation of a part at the expense of the whole [election].” See Corey Latta, *Election and Unity in Paul’s Epistle to the Romans* (MA Thesis, Harding University Graduate School of Religion, 2006), 24. Cf. Latta, *Election and Unity in Paul’s Epistle to the Romans* (Germany: VDM Verlag Dr. Müller, 2009).
as its future hope (Jer. 31:31-34). Once this is perceived, one can then understand how the New Testament Church is also living with the new covenant of God, sealed on the cross of Christ.

The covenantal aspect of Romans 9 places great emphasis on the faithfulness and mercy of God, both to the Gentiles and, even more so, to Israel. The reflective side of this aspect is not only the calling of Israel to faith and obedience, it is conveying the choice of the chosen people either with grateful obedience to the grace of God or sinful rebellion against the mercy and patience of God, such as is demonstrated in Pharaoh’s hardening. Principally, Romans 9 stresses the faithfulness of God in spite of the obduracy of Israel. “He does not choose a people which has something to give Him but one which has everything to receive from Him. He chooses for Himself suffering under the obduracy of this people.”

In other words, these broader perspectives of the faithfulness of Yahweh in the larger biblical story provide a greater appreciation of the New Testament emphasis on the theology of election in the Book of Romans.

Of course, it may seem apparent that the doctrine of reprobation can be drawn from Rom. 9:22-23. However, Paul’s main point here is not to dwell on predestination but to

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241 This new covenant is prophesized in Jer. 31:31 and confirmed by the Hebrews writer in 8:8 and 12:24. However, this does not imply the supersession of Israel by the Church.
242 Bullinger from the earlier Reformed period also highlights the covenantal faithfulness of God in his Romans commentary.
244 CD II/2:206. As Brueggemann also articulates, “Election’ is a traditional way of expressing the conviction that YHWH has ‘chosen’ Israel to be YHWH’s special people in the world and has singularly committed YHWH’s own future to Israel’s well-being. This conviction, expressed especially by the verb ‘choose’, is the pervasive, governing premise of faith in the Old Testament. The premise asserts that YHWH is the God who has made such a decision and is irrevocably linked to Israel, and that Israel’s life and future are inalienably connected to YHWH’s character and purpose.” See Walter Brueggemann, Reverberations of Faith: A Theological Handbook of Old Testament Themes (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 61.
245 There is an important nuance of difference between “fitted (καταρτίζω) for destruction” and “prepared (προετοιμάζω) for glory.” Dunn suggests that Paul wishes to avoid the idea that these vessels were prepared for
discuss the question of God’s covenant with Israel.\textsuperscript{246} The covenant of God with Israel is a positive and protective covenant—positive in that He wants His people to experience the riches of His glory (v. 23), which “shine even brighter”\textsuperscript{247} on those to whom He shows mercy, who were prepared in advance for glory. “In order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus” (Eph. 2:7). However, the covenant of God with Israel does not prescribe dominion or primacy in claiming precedence over the nations; rather, its purpose is to enable Israel to carry out a mission to be a witness of God’s mercy to all and to make His power known in the face of all kinds of injustice.\textsuperscript{248} “Only out of this mission can man comprehend the choice of God.”\textsuperscript{249}

In addition, God’s covenant with Israel is a protective covenant in the sense that the fence becomes the boundary marker to make the people of God fully aware that there is real destruction outside the covenant of God, which serves as the moral and spiritual guardian of His people. It is protective in the sense that God is the guardian of righteousness. Therefore, no matter how dark the night is in the life experiences of God’s elect, they can rest assured that He is in total control of everything, and that those who perpetually live in wickedness and against God’s will for the covenant people of God will ultimately face the judgment of God (Rom. 9:22).

\textsuperscript{247} NLT, (γνωστόν, to make known).
\textsuperscript{249} Horst Seebass, “‘הַנַּעַם’, TDOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 2:87.
Although the role of God’s covenant in electing Israel was acknowledged by Calvin, it was understood to function typologically in relation to election, which safeguards salvation for some while the rest are rejected to eternal condemnation. Conversely, the covenant for Barth is a corporate act in which God chooses not just individuals but a community. It is also God’s ongoing care for the rejected, which unites them to the elected. This covenental aspect of God’s predestination must not be disregarded, especially in the hermeneutical process of interpreting the election of Jacob and the rejection of Esau in Romans 9:12-13. When God announced to Rebecca that the older would serve the younger even before the birth of the twins, it had to do with who would be the true heir of the covenant of Abraham. The prophecy was dealing with covenental promise and not with salvation or reprobation. For Calvin, however, the covenant is a type of election that benefits only those who are predestined to salvation and separates them from those predestined to condemnation because they are outside the covenental benefits of salvation.

Barth further asserts that the redemption of God consists also in the corporate and covenental election of the church community, not just of the individual believers. Within the traditional doctrine of predestination found in Augustine and Calvin, the emphasis is on individual destiny, whether that of eternal life or eternal damnation. In Calvin’s theological

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250 Gibson, Reading the Decree Exegesis, 109.
251 Further, in his Institutes, Calvin does not differentiate between God’s covenant with Israel and the New Covenant. Calvin writes: “The children of the promise [Rom. 9:8], reborn of God, who have obeyed the commands by faith working through love [Gal. 5:6], have belonged to the New Covenant since the world began . . . all the saints whom Scripture mentions as being peculiarly chosen of God from the beginning of the world have shared with us the same blessing unto eternal salvation” (Inst., II.11.10).
252 CD II/2:308-09. CD II/2:310-3. Cf. The ‘individual’ is also referred to the many and the totality (CD II/2:314).
253 Gibson, Reading the Decree Exegesis, 109.
254 Calvin, Romans, 349; cf. Gibson, Reading the Decree Exegesis, 109.
255 “There is no election of an individual man on the basis of which he is not led by the Word into faith, and therefore into the fellowship of believers, and therefore into the Church. What is promised him as an elect person, what is expected of him as such, what he receives from God and what under God he will become, is never a special gift or task or destiny peculiar to himself” (CD II/2:427).
framework, the definition of predestination has an “emphatically futuristic orientation” because he stresses God’s decree of “what He willed to become” of each individual.  

However, Barth tries to call attention to, and make up for, this negligence by directing us toward “the recognition that the election of the individual must be discussed in the closest possible relation to the election of Jesus Christ and the election of the community of God.”

The Scripture does speak of an individual not as ego but as a representative of the many. On the other hand, Barth emphasizes the fact that “individualism” is not truncated but actually assured and honored when we understand the election of the individual as the telos of the election of the community.

In the Old Testament writings, Barth highlights the fact that the Deuteronomic concept of election was an act of God in history, a corporate act in which God chose not just individuals but a nation. Even when God on occasion chose particular individuals, those choices were always fully related to God’s choice of a nation. This corporate act was done in the context of a covenant known as the Deuteronomic covenant. This covenantal act was an arrangement that God made not solely with certain individuals, but with an entire nation. This also meant that the covenant curse of exile and God’s condemnation would fall on the entire nation.

Locke, in his Paraphrase, is quite clear about the “national” versus the “individual” referents in Romans 9. He stands in sharp contrast to the highly individualistic salvific readings of Romans 9 by the Reformers in the sixteenth century and the individualistic

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256 Boersma, Hospitality, 58.
257 CD II/2:308-09.
258 CD II/2:306, 310-11. The individual is also referred to the many and the totality (CD II/2:314).
259 Boersma, Hospitality, 77-78. CD II/2:212, 214-15, 233-34.
pietistic reading of the English Puritans, his contemporaries, in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. All these were already in place well before the twentieth-century reconsiderations. Likewise, Abasciano contends that the Old Testament’s concept of election is clearly corporate, exemplified by the fact that God’s choice of His covenant people is a matter of Old Testament covenant theology. As for the New Testament, the explicit language of election unto salvation is always corporate in Paul’s epistles. Oropeza agrees that Paul’s emphasis rests on corporate rather than individual election, which is based on what he suggests as the “name-switching” principle: “Paul seems to be following the Isaianic example of name-switching whereby the name of God’s people becomes associated with the name of God’s enemy.” Oropeza further notes that, even when Paul uses the language of individualism in the potter and clay illustration (Rom. 9:20), he is ultimately using it in relation to the nation of Israel and the Gentiles. This example is further illuminated by Isaiah’s approach of using singular language to illustrate the relationship between the potter and clay, even though such language points to national Israel. In addition, the language that Paul uses in Romans is mercy-centered, involving his Jewish countrymen in the fact that “God’s patience is intended to lead unbelievers to repentance, and this view is strengthened when we read about God’s patience with those in danger of his ‘wrath’ in Rom 2.4–5. God’s forbearance is intended to lead the objects of wrath to repentance.”

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261 Abasciano, “Corporate Election in Romans 9,” 353.
262 Ibid., 356. “The only case of Paul using the language of election in relation to an individual is Rom 16:13, where he refers to Rufus as “the chosen one in the Lord.” Abasciano also elaborates: “The Mediterranean Hellenistic culture of the first century was collectivist rather than individualistic in outlook, and first-century Judaism was even more so” (ibid.).
263 Oropeza, “God’s Justice and Faithfulness in Romans 9-11,” 63.
264 Ibid., 68: “Isaianic text calls rebellious Israel ‘Sodom’ in Isa 1.10, a context Paul no doubt read when he cites Isa 1.9 in relation to Israel’s current unbelief (Rom 9.29–32).”
265 Ibid., 71.
266 Ibid., 70-71.
Watson argues that Paul’s primary concern in Romans 9 is the direction of corporate and covenantal communities within the context of God’s mercy, and not that of individual destinies. Watson’s reading of Romans disagrees fundamentally with Moo’s claim that Paul sees Jacob and Esau “in terms of their own personal relationship to the promise of God,” with the implication of a “double predestination” solely based on God’s sovereign pleasure to save some individuals and to damn others. According to Watson, within the narrative and prophetic sequences that are arranged in a chiastic structure, “the communal orientation of Paul’s scriptural exegesis becomes fully explicit. His argument is that the divine turning from Jews to Gentiles is consonant with the scriptural account of God’s electing purpose.”

**The Compassion and Mercy of God as a Universal Mitigating Factor**

The modern reading of predestination in Romans 9 places Paul’s emphasis upon God’s concern with the individual and not upon the individual’s concern with God. God’s concern with the individual focuses on His mercy; the individual’s concern with God converges on His knowledge. Yet, “the knowledge of God is eternal and unobservable; it

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267 Douglas Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1996), 585-86.

268 Ibid., 598.

269 Narrative sequence (Rom. 9:6-18) | Prophetic sequence (Rom. 9:19-29)
---|---
A | Israel within Israel (Gen. 21:12; 18:14)
B | The divine call (Gen. 25:23; Mal. 1:2-3)
C | Objects of mercy and hardening (Exod. 33:19; 9:16)
C’ | Vessels of wrath and mercy (Exod. 9:16; 33:19)
B’ | The divine call (Hos. 2:25, 1)
A’ | The remnant within Israel (Isa. 10:22-23; 1:9)

We notice that each pairing (A-A’, B-B’, C-C’) speaks of one covenantal community in relation to another. The first pair, A-A’, speaks of Israel in the covenantal sense, in relation to her remnant. The B-B’ pair is concerned with the election of the Israelites and the Gentile communities, based solely upon the freedom of the mercy of God. Then the C-C’ pair is concerned with the vessels of mercy (Jewish and Gentile believers alike as objects of His mercy [Rom. 9:23]) against the vessels of wrath (Jewish and Gentile unbelievers alike as objects of His wrath [Rom. 9:22]) (Watson, *Beyond the New Perspective*, 318). Watson’s literary-sequence analysis of Romans 9 also clearly reveals the corporate covenantal dimension of Romans, insofar as he shows that Paul “is not interested in individual life stories per se, but in the scriptural precedents, these individuals mentioned establish a divine purpose that takes communal form” (ibid., 314).

270 Ibid.

271 Barth, *Romans*, 347.
occurs altogether beyond time.”\footnote{272} It is only through the mercy shown on the cross that the love of God can be recognized existentially, for it is also “God’s recognition of men.”\footnote{273} When the emphasis is misplaced, as by Augustine and the Reformers expounding Romans 9 as though it were “a scheme of cause and effect,” the significance of the text is thereby compromised.\footnote{274} In other words, instead of emphasizing human interest in individual destiny—a quantitative development of blessedness towards a person’s eschatological fate—the modern rereading of Romans 9 allows us to see how Paul desires to highlight God’s attention to covenantal conformity,\footnote{275} which constitutes a qualitative movement of mercy and grace towards God’s purpose of election.

The reading of Paul’s theme of God’s mercy in chapter 9 allows us to see that God’s rejection of Esau is not final, and that the God of Jacob is also the God of Esau; God is the God of Esau because He is the God of Jacob. The far-reaching implication here is that through His rejection, we may be elected in His mercy; through His tribulation, we may know the bringer of help.\footnote{276} Barth ponders, “How could we apprehend the God of Jacob, save when we bow before the God of Esau? How can we comprehend election, save as the transformation of our rejection?”\footnote{277} Likewise, mercy is magnified by divine forbearance in the hardening of Pharaoh’s heart. The principal reason suggested by Barth is this: When God reveals Himself to men, “He confronts creatureliness with the ‘And Yet’ of the Creator, the immensity of human sin with the ‘And Yet’—remember the Kapporeth (iii. 25)!—of His covering forgiveness.”\footnote{278} Whether it be the illustration of Jacob and Esau or that of Moses

\footnote{272} “It must therefore be distinguished absolutely from temporal human knowledge” (ibid., 325).
\footnote{273} Ibid.
\footnote{274} Ibid., 324.
\footnote{275} Rom. 8:29; Phil. 3:10.
\footnote{276} Barth, Romans, 350.
\footnote{277} Ibid., 352.
\footnote{278} Ibid., 358. Cf. Ps. 78:17, 36.
and Pharaoh, the highlight of God’s mercy is superbly articulated by Barth: “In Time, we are vessels of wrath: in Eternity, we are not merely something more, but something utterly different; we are—vessels of mercy.”

The current consideration in reading Romans 9 is the awareness of the need to relocate our focus away from the divine decree of predestination to the divine presence of the One who shows mercy, thus suggesting a plausible and more theological reading of the predestination language in Romans 9, which is anchored in God’s mercy in election through the cross. This suggestion is made apparent through the context of chapter 8 where the “language of predestination and foreknowledge is a reassuring one for those in suffering, weakness, and in need of grace.” The language of predestination and foreknowledge is one of divine grace, not of divine prediction; it is the surprising permeation of God’s active mercy, not “a closed system of static fate.”

God’s election of grace through His covenant is the most remarkable manifestation of His divine mercy towards the people of Israel, who historically never cease to prove themselves unworthy of the election. Nevertheless God in His infinite mercy continues to love and care for His people above all else, even to the point of attaching His name to them so that He will be known by all other nations as the God of Israel. Therefore, the OT Scripture writers call it a covenant of love (in translation of בְּרִית הָחָסְדֵּה, Deut. 7:9, 12; 2 Chron. 6:14; Neh. 1:5, 9:32 NIV). God loves, therefore He elects, just as Schrenk fittingly expresses:

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279 Ibid., 360. Barth is not implying that there is no eternal punishment. What he is stressing is the immense mercy of God through the cross. If it were not so, we would all still be vessels of wrath (cf. CD III/2:602-04).
280 Yeo, “Messianic Predestination in Romans 8 and Classical Confucianism,” 272.
281 Ibid.
The basis of love is not a logical basis. It is the admission, proceeding from the strongest possible feeling [emphasis added], that the election is an inexplicable fact. In so far as it can be explained and interpreted, this can be only in terms of its factuality, not of the motives, as a comprehensive explanation would demand. 283

Sanders is accurate when he emphasizes the central role which the mercy of God plays in the election of Israel, specifically as perceived within the Jewish realm of thought. Though obedience to the law is set within the framework of God’s election and covenant relationship with Israel, God, with all things considered, makes a provision of mercy so that, should one fall short and transgress, the law itself would provide means of atonement. 284

When we come to the New Testament, the sacrificial atonement of Christ portrays the means of the Levitical atonement which the law requires. It is executed completely and far-reaching when Christ takes the place of the transgressors, when He judges them by judging Himself with the judgment of death on the cross, in order to reverse the course of the human race rushing headlong into eternal death. 285 In the election of grace (Rom. 11:5), Christ’s atonement is God’s decree and mercy fulfilled in time in the election of Jesus Christ to become man in order to reconcile the world to Himself. 286 From the beginning of time, God determined to be the kind of God who would act graciously toward humanity “in an act of unconditional self-determination” in the name of His Son. 287 Such perception, Barth argues, helps one to understand that the election of grace in Christ is light and filled with gladness rather than dark and obscure as portrayed by the Reformed tradition. The critical misstep of

285 CD, IV/1:213; CD II/2:363-64.
286 CD, IV/1:222. “The election of Jesus Christ” (CD II.2, 103). Jesus took our reprobation upon himself so that He is both the truly Elect and the truly Rejected one (CD II/2:353).
287 Ibid., II/2:99.
288 Ibid., II/2:12, 13, 104. Because Jesus Christ is the truly Elect one, election is no longer concealed in the dim alcove of eternity, but is fully revealed in Jesus Christ, as the Scripture has declared.
Calvin’s doctrine of reprobation lies in his taking election as God’s decision to elect only some people to salvation and to view Christ’s atonement as simply the means by which salvation is accomplished for the elect.289

The execution of His covenant of love constitutes this divine movement of the election of grace. In a sense, Paul’s doctrine of election is a reflection of this covenant of love in the election of Israel, where Paul stresses that God’s mercy is interpreted through the concrete symbol of the cross that opens God’s salvation (10:1) to all people, Jews and Gentiles alike (9:24). Once again, we see the difference in the exposition between Barth and Calvin. Whereas Calvin emphasizes the wrath of God as the law’s judgmental character, Barth stresses more the gracious character of God’s mercy.290 In his shorter commentary on Romans, with his emphasis on the mercy of God in His Gospel, Barth writes:

His will certainly has the character of wrath too. How can he have mercy upon man without being angry with his perversity? . . . But by means of that very judgment, announced in all those vessels of wrath and executed at Golgotha, God wants to save man and will save him . . . But for all that, we must not forget the aim of this divine judgment. When it is reached, under the disguise of the most terrible negation of which in his Son he will make himself the victim, God will not say ‘no’, but ‘yes’ to Israel and in Israel to all men . . . For the sake of the One who was to come, whom God carried through the pains of the rejection he suffered, he endures all the rejected, he also endures Pharaoh. He endures them so that they may meet with him who was to come.291

289 Barth maintains that this kind of election is “the blind election of fate.” Divine election (divine affirmation and willing) is salvation and not damnation (ibid., 27).
291 Barth, Shorter Romans, 120-21. In CD II/2:212, commenting on Romans 9, Barth similarly writes, “And on the basis of Israel’s election . . . God proceeds to elect men in and from its midst for special appointment, mission and representative function, as exponents and instruments of the mercy in which He has made this people His own. Their existence does not alter in the very least the determination of Israel as such and on the whole. But it sets in relief what Israel has to reveal in reflection of the divine judgment: the misery of man, not as it is left to take its course, but as it is taken to heart by God and considered and limited from all eternity; not the wrath of God raging for its own sake, but the fire of His love which consumes and yet does not destroy, but rather purifies and saves. It is, indeed, in this sense that the crucifixion of Christ is the fulfillment of the divine judgment. It is in this sense, too, that the negative side of the Church’s message (as the Word of the cross of Jesus Christ) should and will retain its actuality until the end of the world.”
Finally, in commenting on 9:15-18, Barth appeals primarily to God’s being, as this text reveals the very nature of God as the One who is free in the exercise of His mercy and compassion.\textsuperscript{292} This is very different from Calvin’s approach in dwelling on God’s will and His eternal decree.\textsuperscript{293} Gibson presents a fine analysis:

This takes us to the heart of the difference between Calvin and Barth on Romans 9. At almost every point in the mystery of predestination, Calvin is happy to acquiesce in the face of God’s secret counsel and his good pleasure which cannot be known by humanity. He is satisfied that there must be a reason why God’s justice is not impugned by acting in this way but we cannot know it. Barth regards this kind of response to be, in the first place, simply an ignoring of the question, as it does not explain how God can attribute guilt to man in the face of his absolute power. More fundamentally, Barth views the classical interpretation of these verses as an expression of an indeterminacy in God’s actions which is not tenable following the revelation of the divine nature in 9.15.\textsuperscript{294}

Indeed, what Calvin sees as God’s secret decree, which can only be speculative, Barth calls attention to God’s merciful being, which is “Christologically determined”\textsuperscript{295} in Romans 9.

\textbf{Summary}

Modern scholarship on Romans has opened up new perspectives for contemporary readers to interpret Paul’s epistle with fresh insights and understandings. These new perspectives do not always lead to the same conclusions, however, because of the various aspects of the text and the scholars’ own horizons and pre-understandings.\textsuperscript{296} These presuppositions are a necessary part of the interpretation process, together with the interpretive choices made by previous eras, especially those of the Reformers of the sixteenth century, but must be subjected to further scrutiny and revision.

\textsuperscript{292} \textit{CD II/2:222.}  
\textsuperscript{293} Calvin, \textit{Romans}, 359-62.  
\textsuperscript{294} Gibson, \textit{Reading the Decree Exegesis}, 127-28.  
\textsuperscript{295} Ibid., 128. \textit{CD II/2:223.}  
\textsuperscript{296} Using the terminologies of Gadamer and Bultmann respectively (Grenholm and Patte, “Playing Scriptural Criticism on Romans in Multiple Keys,” \textit{Modern Interpretation of Romans}, 5).
We saw that the theological core of the Gospel for the Reformers, “justification by faith,” has had significant influence in western Christendom and has become the dominant framework for reading Paul in Romans. Even John Locke in his *Paraphrase and Notes on the Epistles of St. Paul* considers justification by grace through faith in Christ as central to his own theology.\(^{297}\) With the dawn of the twentieth century, there have been numerous waves in rethinking previous hermeneutical and theological presuppositions, beginning with the contributions of Schweitzer, Montefiore, Moore, and Davies on first-century Judaism, and extending to Barth’s reorientation of the theology of election and Sanders’s studies in reconsidering second-temple Judaism. As expected, not all scholars are in agreement with these interpretive shifts, in spite of holding similar basic theological core values drawn from the Gospel. However, these ways of broadening the reading of Romans are “all aimed at being true to the message of the gospel and true to tradition.”\(^{298}\)

These various readings of Romans prove the point that each reader and each interpreter must be faithful to exegetical accuracy. We must engage this epistle with the following considerations: the context of God’s *covenantal* choice of Israel, the framework of *wholeness* in God’s redemptive plan, the perspective of *grace-centered* encouragement, and the model of *frontier* reading as an alternative reading of the text. Our foremost concern should not be whether the interpretive results are in alignment with Reformed traditions or doctrinal positions. Our exegetical and theological responsibility should rather be twofold: to appreciate the “rich diversity of traditions,”\(^{299}\) and to set free the exegetical work of the Word. We must allow the Spirit of God to carry its readers over\(^{300}\) to where diverse

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\(^{298}\) Ehrensperger, “Reformers in Conversation over Romans,” 198.

\(^{299}\) Ibid., 199.

emphases contribute to the richness of the fruits of interpretation. Our aim is to better grasp the true sense that Paul would want us to understand and share in his epistle.

All this modern scholarship, whether coming from the Reformed tradition or otherwise, contributes insightful perspectives and resources that allow us to derive a fuller and richer understanding of Romans 9 in reference to the theology of election and doctrine of predestination. They try to raise God’s “yes,” in relation to a human being’s “no,” to the forefront without impugning the justice of God. The human destiny of the non-elect does not have to be as stark and hopeless as that presented by the traditional Reformed interpretation of Romans 9. The three approaches in the modern reading of Romans 9 concern the Christological grace-centered emphasis in the theology of election, the covenantal aspect of Paul’s discourse in Romans 9 and the compassion and mercy of God as a universal mitigating factor; and these all initiate a substantial and significant reappraisal of even the most particularistic biblical concept of election. Biblical particularism contains a universal horizon, which solidly centers on God’s grace as well as on Israel’s responsibility to respond to this grace in such a way that she may become a light in her mission to the non-elect.  

Paul’s tenor in this passage reflects the clear message of the OT prophets, the wideness of God’s mercy—that the non-elect foreigners are included in God’s blessings. This is likely why Draper and Moxnes both proclaim that divine predestination must not be read from within an imperial setting, for Paul is not an imperial theologian but a missionary to the Gentiles in a frontier context.

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302 Cf. Kaminsky, Yet I Loved Jacob, 127.
The study of the interpretive approaches and the hermeneutical emphases that each era has undertaken reveals how diversely their cultural, personal, or theological contexts have influenced interpretive choices regarding Romans 9. However, from the intricacy of the hermeneutical interpretations of Romans throughout the centuries, we have observed that none of these theological resources (as far as I know) have interpreted Romans 9 from the perspective of the cross, or offered a “cruciform” reading of predestination. Hence, to gain a deeper appreciation for Paul’s view of election and for rethinking the doctrine of predestination in Romans 9, the inquisitive mind is prompted to ask: does Romans 9 call for the context of the cross in its reading? Which texts and historical contexts call for the reading of the cross? If we were to read Romans 9 through the lens of the cross, would the theological implications of its reading be different? If so, then what would the conversation and interpretation look like?

304 Though Luther suggested that Christ’s cross and suffering “will teach the right doctrine of predestination” (Luther, Works of Martin Luther, vol. 6, 460), he never proceeded further in his exposition on Romans 9 or on the doctrine of predestination.
PART II

THE THEOLOGY OF ELECTION AND THE CROSS BASED ON ROMANS NINE

The history of the interpretation of Romans 9 demonstrates how diversely one can construe the meanings and implications of this text according to one’s doctrinal stand or theological persuasion. Nonetheless, the major hermeneutical contributions of modern scholarship to the reading of Romans 9—covering the Christocentric emphasis, the universal appeal of the grace and mercy of God, and the frontier reading—actually resume some of the key interpretive emphases of both the patristic and medieval eras.\(^1\) These modern perspectives intensify the need to reorient the reading of Romans 9 and its interpretation of the doctrines of election and predestination.

Part II of this dissertation will go a step further in the reading of Romans 9 to uncover how the cross is the proper and central theological lens for understanding Paul’s view of election and, if that is true, how a number of traditional approaches to election and predestination, especially in Reformed circles, need to be reconsidered. The ensuing chapters will chart the course in demonstrating that the way of the cross is the manifesto of God’s purpose of election. If the cross of Jesus Christ is indeed reckoned as the prism for reading Romans 9, then how would the doctrines of election and predestination emerge

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\(^1\) The Christocentric emphasis: cf. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, IV, 26.1; Mihoc, “Greek Church Fathers and Orthodox Biblical Hermeneutics,” 22; Haykin, *Rediscovering*, 76; Origen, *Romans*, 3.7.10, 14; Ambrosiaster, *Commentaries on Romans and 1-2 Corinthians*, 3:22-23. These Church Fathers learned to read the Bible as a single book about Christ. Thus for them, Christology is the norm, the foundation and subject matter of biblical interpretation.

The universal theme of the grace and mercy of God: Augustine adheres to the theme of grace throughout his *Propositions from the Epistle to the Romans* and *Unfinished Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*. The primacy of the theological theme of grace becomes one of the main focuses in the commentaries of William of St. Thierry (William of St. Thierry, *Romans*, 194-96, 199), Peter Abelard (Abelard, *Romans*, 87-88), Thomas Aquinas (Aquinas, *Romans*, 9:6-13, 763), and Nicholas of Lyra (Levy, *The Bible in Medieval Tradition*, 52). The Reformers also highlight the theme of mercy in Romans 9, however they only apply it to the elect.

The frontier or the incarnational reading: such as Chrysostom’s *synkatabasis* principle (cf. notes 28 and 30 of chapter 1).
differently in its treatment? How would the *cross-centered* reading substantiate Colenso’s “missionary reading” or Draper’s “frontier reading” and reconfigure the reading of the texts in Romans 9 and other places regarding predestination?
CHAPTER 3
THE TRINITARIAN ECONOMY IN ROMANS NINE

Chapter 3 will identify the unity in the diverse interpretations of Romans 9 through its literary structure and repeated catchwords. These textual methods employed by Paul point out the primary theme of God’s mercy and faithfulness in His plan of salvation. Simultaneously, these means become the bases for us to further interpret election in Romans 9 from a Trinitarian economic perspective. This perspective is drawn out of the passage to demonstrate the following ways and works of the Triune God: a) the witness of the Holy Spirit in the course of election, b) the mercy of God the Father in the community of the elect, and c) the cross of Christ the Son in the connection between Jacob and Esau.

The Unity of Romans 9 from a Literary and Textual Perspective

In the exegetical and theological battlegrounds of Romans 9, we seek to find the unity amongst its diverse interpretations. To avoid misconstruing Paul’s argument and intention as he develops his view of election and predestination, we should not overlook the fuller exposition of Paul’s main thesis in Romans 9. Furthermore, we need to analyze whether there really is a lack of logic, or perhaps a flaw in Paul’s reasoning. Lambrecht for instance speaks of “Paul’s one-sidedness, as well as his mental leaps . . . a stretched consistency”.¹ Actually, the literary structure of this passage may shed light on some of these uncertainties. The main context in which Paul is situated when he presents his argumentation from verses 6-29 is worthy of note. The themes or key words within this passage also help to illuminate the unity of the diverse claims in Romans 9.

¹ Lambrecht, *Pauline studies*, 59-60.
The seeming “lack or leap of logic” in Paul’s argument likely stems from two general observations. First, in verses 1-5 Paul views the whole ethnic Israel as the called nation, while in the latter verses 6-13 he changes to the position that only part of Israel is elected.\(^2\) Second, he expresses concerns with Israel’s salvation in Christ that later evolve into questions about God’s selecting process in fulfilling the Abrahamic covenantal promise. Paul’s real intent and purpose in this text, if read through a linear logic process,\(^3\) may understandably cause some to see the shift within each observation as a “flaw in Paul’s reasoning.”\(^4\) However, several scholars have demonstrated through the literary structure and the repeated key words in this passage that Paul’s flow of reasoning as well as his deliberations are indisputably unified. First we will look at the literary evidence for unity in Romans 9, and then we will turn to thematic evidence for unity.

**Literary Structure and Repeated Catchwords**

Dunn has suggested a chiastic outline\(^5\) using some of the key words in Paul’s presentation. Whether Paul’s use of these particular words is intentional or not,\(^6\) the chiasm shows a thoughtful line in Paul’s reasoning.

\begin{align*}
\text{vv. 6-9} & \quad \text{λόγος, Ἰσραήλ, κληθῆσεθαι, σπέρμα, τέκνα (θεοῦ)} \\
\text{vv. 10-13} & \quad \text{καλέω, ἀγαπάω} \\
\text{vv. 14-18} & \quad \text{ἐλεέω, θέλω} \\
\text{vv. 19-23} & \quad \text{θέλω, ἐλεος} \\
\text{vv. 24-25} & \quad \text{καλέω, ἀγαπάω} \\
\text{vv. 26-29} & \quad \text{κληθῆσονται, υἱοί (θεοῦ), Ἰσραήλ, λόγος, σπέρμα}
\end{align*}

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\(^{2}\) Ibid.

\(^{3}\) Cf. Stendahl’s observation regarding Paul’s intent and purpose in page 14.

\(^{4}\) Lambrecht, *Pauline studies*, 60.

\(^{5}\) Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, 537.

\(^{6}\) The Church has, of course, assumed that Paul penned these words under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The one chief characteristic of the predominant patristic exegesis, whether Alexandrian or Antiochene, is that Scripture is the very inspired Word of God through the Holy Spirit (cf. Lewis, *The Philocalia of Origen*, 32; Haykin, *Rediscovering the Church Fathers*, 81, 86; Patte, “Reading Romans with Greek Fathers,” 204-06, 220).
The repetition of these key words shows that the calling and election of God both to Israel and the Gentiles are at work and are previously recorded in the Scripture. Noteworthy as well is the focal point of Dunn’s chiastic outline: ἐλεέω, θέλω and θέλω, ἔλεος. Based on these key words in Romans 9, the chiasm establishes the theme that the whole basis of God’s will of election is His divine mercy.7 It supports the reasoning that when Paul makes his transition from chapter 9-11 to the next major section of his epistle, he begins with the theological import of God’s mercy as his appeal: “in view of God’s mercy” (Rom. 12:1).

Furthermore, Watson has pointed out another chiastic arrangement built around the theme of God’s election process and purpose. It occurs in three pairs of contrasting figures.8 “The first two pairings (Isaac and Ishmael, Jacob and Esau) are well known, but the third (Moses and Pharaoh) was created by Paul himself.”9

A  Isaac and Ishmael
   1  “In Isaac shall your seed be called” (Gen. 21:12; Rom. 9:7)
   2  “At this time I will come and Sarah shall have a son” (Gen. 18:10, 14; Rom. 9:9)

B  Jacob and Esau
   1  “The greater will serve the lesser” (Gen. 25:23; Rom. 9:12)
   2  “Jacob I loved, Esau I hated” (Mal. 1:2-3; Rom. 9:13)

C  Moses and Pharaoh
   1  “I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion” (Exod. 33:19; Rom. 9:15)
   2  “For this purpose I raised you up, so as to show my power in you and so that my name may be proclaimed in all the earth” (Exod. 9:16; Rom. 9:17)

God is the speaker in each case and the divine utterances enact a division, first within the original pair of Isaac and Ishmael (A), then explicitly between Jacob and Esau (B), and

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7 In the Old Testament, mercy is used to describe a quality intrinsic to the nature of God (Ps. 116:5). The mercy of God that He bestows on His people cannot be exhausted (Lam. 3:22); even in wrath and judgment, God still remembers His mercy (Isa. 55:7; Hab. 3:2). Thus Paul links this same divine pursuit of mercy to the doctrine of election in Romans 9-11. See Philip H. Tower, “Mercy,” in Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1996), 521.
8 Watson, Beyond the New Perspective, 310.
9 Ibid., 309.
finally in conjunction with Moses and Pharaoh (C).\textsuperscript{10} We can see that A1 and C2 are symmetrically arranged between “called” and “proclaimed” in highlighting “name” and “seed” (singular, both in Rom. 9 and Gen. 21 in LXX). There is also a parallel in the next level of A2 and C1, between “I will come . . . have a son” and “I will have mercy,” linking having a “son” with “mercy.”\textsuperscript{11}

These two chiastic outlines are critical in our reading of Romans. The first chiastic outline from Dunn shows that the theme of mercy is the main focal point of the passage. This theme in fact is interwoven throughout Romans 9-11 as Paul discusses the purpose of divine election. For this reason, Romans 9 and its doctrine of election must be interpreted in terms of God’s mercy. The second chiastic outline brought out by Watson reveals that among the three pairs of contrasting figures, the connection of Jacob and Esau is central. This central pair, Jacob and Esau, is more than just a set of twin brothers demonstrating that “not all descended from Israel are Israel” (Rom. 9:6), or illustrating the difference between the ‘natural children’ and ‘children of promise’ (Rom. 9:8). Hermeneutically, the centrality of Christ the Messiah\textsuperscript{12} can be ascertained in this vital pairing, which will be discussed in a subsequent section. The pairing of Jacob and Esau in fact helps show why the theology of the cross is the impetus for the whole understanding of the purpose of election as Paul states it in verse 11.

\textsuperscript{10} Ibid., 310.
\textsuperscript{11} The link between “son” and “mercy” is an interesting insight that might prefigure Christ and His cross.
\textsuperscript{12} “Christ remains central to Paul’s reasoning. Israel’s failure to believe in the Messiah is the reason their situation is desperate from the apostle’s standpoint. Gentile Christian believers, by contrast, are benefiting from Israel’s prerogatives and blessings.” See Das, \textit{Paul and the Jews} (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2003), 85.
Primary Thesis of God’s Faithfulness

A second sign of unity within the diverse aspects of Romans 9 has been underlined by Markus Barth and Jeffrey Capshaw. They stress the ways in which Paul’s primary thesis in this text is “God’s faithfulness through His Word.” While Barth looks at the bigger frame of the text, Romans 9-11, Capshaw looks within chapter 9, where he discerns the following outline:

Primary Thesis 1: The Word of God has not failed (9:6).
1. (9: 11) Before Isaac was born and before he had done anything good or bad the Word of God said that he would be favored by God.

2. (9:22-30) God determined beforehand to call (domain of communication, i.e. the Word of God) some from the Gentiles and some from the Jews “vessels of wrath and vessels of glory.” It was just as the Word of God had promised in Hosea and Isaiah.

Both Barth and Capshaw call attention to the fact that Paul is stressing the faithfulness of God in His promises through the covenants, in spite of Israel’s infidelity and unbelief at the time. The reason for which Paul cites and alludes to so many Scriptures in this passage is to defend God’s faithfulness in and through His word. Furthermore, God’s faithfulness through His Word allows Paul to reinterpret election in light of God’s salvific will for the Gentiles. While the traditional Reformers held ἡ κατ᾽ ἑκλογὴν πρόθεσις (v. 11)

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14 Capshaw, Romans 9-11 and Election, 16.
15 “God’s word, once spoken, does not crumble under the impact of time, or of rebellion (3:2-3; 9:6); God has not rejected Israel (11:1-2), the whole of Israel will be saved (11:26a); the godlessness will be removed from Jacob, their sins will be forgiven (11:26b-27); the members of this people remain ‘God’s beloved’ for the sake of the elected patriarchs, because God revokes neither his gracious gifts nor his calling (11:28-29)” (Barth, The People of God, 30).
16 Capshaw, Romans 9-11 and Election, 16.
17 “Pauline theology is thus intertextual theology: explicit scriptural citations are simply the visible manifestations of an intertextuality that is ubiquitous and fundamental to Pauline discourse.” See Watson, Paul and the Hermeneutics of Faith (London: T&T Clark, 2004), 17.
to be both predetermining and causative, emphasizing a double predestination, Paul is actually reinterpreting election in light of the history of the Patriarchs and the inclusion of the Gentiles. In other words, Paul is less interested in abstract claims about God’s eternal choices, and more interested in specific Scriptural claims (Rom. 9:4-5, 25-29). In Romans 9:4-5, Paul frames his discussion of Israel’s present plight also in terms of God’s covenant faithfulness to Israel in the past. The contemporary exclusion of many Jews does not in itself invalidate God’s faithful promise through His Word. Romans 9:25-29 calls attention to God’s mercy to the Gentiles, “who are not my people,” such that they become “my people.” If God is so merciful to the Gentiles, how much more will He restore the “prodigal people” of God to the status of being called once again “sons of the living God.” For Paul, the “remnant” is a sign that God’s mercy is at work all the time and Israel’s restoration is a certainty. In it God’s promise is realized and victorious. Thus Paul encourages his readers to see a single divine electing purpose at work both amongst the

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18 Hodge takes the word rendered purpose to mean “a determination of the will,” which “of itself expresses the idea of its being sovereign.” See Charles Hodge, Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publ. Co., 1968), 309.
19 Schrenk, “ἐκλέγομαι,” 179.
20 “The adoption as son” (Ex. 4:22; Deut. 7:6), “the divine glory” (Ex. 40:34-35; Lev. 9:6, 23), “the covenants” (Gen. 17:2; Ex. 24; Jos. 24), “the law” (Ex. 20:1-17; Deut. 4:7-8; Ps. 147:19), “the temple worship” (Ex. 25-31), “the promises” (Deut. 26:18-19; 1 Kings 8:56), “the patriarchs” (Deut. 7:8; 10:15; Rom. 11:28), “the ancestry to Christ” (Num. 24:17; Rom. 1:3).
24 “Paul’s hermeneutic of reversal is far-ranging and profound in its effects, necessitating a radical rereading of texts foundational to Israel’s understanding of election. Projected through this interpretive lens, Hosea’s moving depiction of God’s passionate commitment to his people Israel is refocused and refocused into a prophecy of the ‘riches of God’s glory’ now showered upon Gentile ‘vessels of mercy’” (Wagner, Isaiah and Paul in concert in the letter to the Romans, 83).
25 “Paul invokes Isaiah, not in order to establish the fact that Israel is suffering under God’s wrath, but to claim that by calling ‘us . . . from among the Jews,’ God is faithfully preserving a remnant of Israel and bringing his people’s chastisement to an end” (ibid., 107).
26 Lambrecht, Pauline studies, 53. “The idea of the remnant refers back to the beginning of the explanations, for in verse 6 it was stressed that God’s word has not failed” (ibid., 38).
covenantal people of God and the Gentiles who were once “not my people.”

Paul affirms the election of Israel through God’s unchanging promises in the Old Testament, as he reinterprets the election of the Gentiles in the light of the same prophetic words of the Old Testament. Explicitly, his view of God’s purpose of election is consistent with His mercy and faithful promises to all people as declared in the Scripture. In a sense, Paul’s understanding of the doctrine of election in Romans 9-11 is a demythologization of the Jewish concept of election that is attached to a form of nationalism. Paul’s reading of the Scriptures does not reflect an election where predestination is a direct divine determination of human’s destiny, but an election where in predestination God decrees a plan of salvation (Rom. 9-11, explicitly 10:9-13) through the cross (10:21) that is available to all people (“anyone” 10:11, “everyone” 10:13).

**Election in Romans 9 from a Trinitarian Perspective**

The unity and the flow of Paul’s argument in this passage are established through the structural and thematic reasons stated above. This validates our decision to study election as a central doctrine in the text. It also presses the reader of Romans 9-11 to recognize the way that Paul’s discussion of election engages a specifically Trinitarian articulation of God, who works out His election of grace in a definite, yet surprising way. That is, the structural unity of the text opens up Paul’s integrated doctrine of God in election, and it turns out to be

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28 Köberle, J. *Sünde und Gnade im religiösen Leben des Volkes Israel bis auf Christum: eine Geschichte des vorchristlichen Heilsbewusstseins*. Cf. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 40. Where the Jewish thinkers differ significantly with the Christian tradition is in the understanding of the covenant of election of one nation versus the new covenant of election among all nations.
29 1QS 3.18-25; 1QH 15.13-19; 1QS 11.1; 1QH 10.9f. (ibid., 259.)
30 The nuances of “stretched out my hands” could include a reference to Christ being crucified with His hands outstretched. It provides a vivid image of God’s dealings even with reprobate sinners with full tenderness and mercy (cf. Matt. 23:37).
31 “Christianity interprets [the doctrine of election] as the concrete symbol of a possibility open to all people” (Wyschogrod and Soulen, *Abraham's Promise*, 184).
one of clear Trinitarian form. Just this form, finally, elucidates specific aspects of Paul’s typological reasoning. While a fuller treatment of Paul’s Trinitarian theology in relation to this theme awaits the next chapter, here we can note specific aspects of Paul’s “economic” approach to election, in a way that allows his typological imagery to explicate his view of divine election in a particular and rich fashion. The evidence for this typology includes the witness of the Holy Spirit in the course of election and the mercy of God the Father in the community of the elect. However, what is underscored, as a surprising insight, is the cross of Christ the Son manifested in the connection between Esau and Jacob.

**The Witness of the Holy Spirit in the Course of Election**

In the study of Trinitarian election, the Holy Spirit is seldom discussed in detail. Yet the works of Trinitarian election are unmistakable in the Epistles. For instance, the apostle Peter greets the recipients of his epistle in the following fashion: “Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied” (1 Pet. 1:2, KJV). Ontologically, if God’s election is an eternal one, all three persons of the Triune God must be involved with this perpetual decision, from its eternal conception to its historical electing events. In fact, eternal election, seen in light of the Trinitarian approach, significantly enriches our understanding of the dynamics in the Trinitarian economy, and it broadens our scope of insight into the study of the immanent Trinity. McCormack argues, election is the work of the Triune God and constitutes God’s being itself in the act of election. Specifically, election is manifested in the economic Trinity (Triune God ad

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33 Will be explicated in the next chapter.
extra), which in turn communicates the inner relationships of the immanent Trinity (Triune God in se).  

**His Work of Regeneration**

In both Romans 8 and 9, Paul talks about the work of the Holy Spirit in connection with the eternal goal and purpose of God in His election of grace. Paul sees God’s work among the Gentiles through reflecting on God’s covenantal relationship with Israel, which was brought about through the promise of His Word. Regarding the covenantal people of God, Paul states that there are still two realities: those who are merely of natural Israel, the children of the earthly flesh with its sinful nature (cf. Rom. 8:4-8) apart from divine influence, and those who are of the spiritual Israel, the children of promise regenerated by the Spirit (Rom. 2:28-29; 8:14-16; Phil. 3:3; Col. 2:11). Those who are created by birth and those who are created by the Spirit (κατὰ πνεῦμα 8:5) do not have the same share in God. Paul declares, “For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel . . . it is not the natural children who are God’s children” (9:6, 8).

Within Paul’s discussion of the salvation of Jews and Gentiles, he reminds his readers of similar realities: his own physical ethnic credentials (11:1) and his personal spiritual encounter (8:2). What had happened in that spiritual encounter is that the Holy Spirit effectively set him free from the law of sin and death to new life in Christ Jesus. The Holy Spirit is significantly called “the Spirit of the life through or in Christ Jesus” (8:2). This is the life of a person who becomes one of the community of the elect, who is also named as

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35 The immanent Trinity is the inner set of interrelationships within the Triune God, who is manifested as the economic Trinity through the cross. Rahner on the other hand maintains that “The economic Trinity is the immanent Trinity and the immanent Trinity is the economic Trinity.” See Karl Rahner, *The Trinity*, trans. Joseph Donceel (NY: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1977), 22.

one of “God’s children of the promise” (9:8). Therefore, its creator, the Holy Spirit in the new creation process of election, is called “the Spirit of the life in or through Christ Jesus.” The fact what the believers have “in Christ Jesus” is shown in 6:1-11, and stated in 6:11.³⁷ Besides His birthing creation of the elect, Paul declares to his audience that the Holy Spirit is the witness to that course of election (8:11-16)—born of the Spirit (Jn. 3:5-8).

**His Witness of Assurance**

When Paul says, “I tell the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit” (9:1 NKJV), he speaks of witnessing “in the Holy Spirit.” He means “in connection with the Holy Spirit,” who enlightens him.³⁸ Paul does not merely respond with anguish while expressing his utter concern for his kinsmen according to the flesh; rather, he appeals to his conscience by the Spirit and the Word of God.³⁹ If he could be shown from the Word of God, which is also the Spirit’s voice, that he is mistaken, his conscience as well as his discourse on the election of both Gentiles and Israel would at once yield accordingly.⁴⁰

The witness of the Holy Spirit in the elect is declared by Paul in Romans 8:16-17: “The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.” Here the Holy Spirit Himself witnesses by testifying in the heart of the believers, His birthing creation, that “we are God’s children.” The Spirit who testifies of Christ (Jn. 15:26), according to the word of Christ Himself, is the Spirit who

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³⁸ Ibid., 582.
³⁹ “The Word of God” refers both to 9:1, “speaking the truth in Christ,” and 9:6, “the Word of God has not failed.”
⁴⁰ Ibid.
enables the human race to see, to hear, to accept and to recognize Jesus Christ “as the Son of Man who in obedience to God went to death for the reconciliation of the world and was exalted in His humiliation as the Son of God, and in Him their own exaltation to be the children of God.”\(^{41}\) The Spirit summons humanity from death to true knowledge of God in Jesus Christ (Jn. 14:26). The awakening power of the Holy Spirit drives sinful men and women to look to Jesus Christ and listen to Him, and he calls them to faith. In so doing the Spirit “creates the presupposition on the basis of which the sinful humanity can and actually do believe.”\(^{42}\) This event of faith directed and effected by the Holy Spirit “is not merely cognitive as a human act but it is also creative in character.”\(^{43}\) Undeniably, the Holy Spirit Himself bears witness to the elect of their assurance, not in self-examination or self-evaluation, which might lead to self-justification or self-condemnation, but exclusively in faith, that they are the children of God (Rom. 8:16, cf. Acts 5:32),\(^{44}\) children by virtue of new birth, effected by the regeneration of the Holy Spirit.\(^{45}\)

Reading Romans 9 through the Trinitarian perspective allows us to recover and specify the unique and pivotal role of the Holy Spirit in the divine election of the Triune God. Eternal election seen in light of the Trinitarian approach also enriches our hermeneutical study of Romans 9 and its doctrine of election, insofar as we see the absolute engagement of God’s being in the whole act of election. The dynamics of the Trinitarian economy in both Romans 8 and 9, specifically the works of the Holy Spirit in connection with the eternal goal and purpose of God in His election, authenticate that God takes the plight of human depravity seriously. In His deep compassion for the sinful predicament of His precious creation after

\(^{42}\) \textit{CD IV/1:753.}
\(^{43}\) Ibid.
\(^{44}\) \textit{CD II/2:339-40.}
\(^{45}\) Lenski, \textit{Romans}, 526.
His own image, He resolved in all wisdom to pursue sinful humanity with His divine mercy. Hence, in the ensuing section, we will observe how the mercy of God the Father serves as a key theme in Paul’s deliberation about God’s predestination in Trinitarian election.

**The Mercy of God the Father in the Community of the Elect**

Pondering Israel’s destiny within God’s plan, we find that the mercy of God comes to the forefront as a major theme in Paul’s argument about God’s purpose of election in 9:15-26. At the culmination of his argument in 11:30-32, Paul returns to the theme of mercy, specifically to plea for those who are disobedient.

Just as you [Gentiles] who were at one time disobedient to God have now received *mercy* as a result through of their [Israel’s] disobedience, so they too have now become disobedient in order that they too may now receive *mercy* as a result of God’s *mercy* to you. For God has bound everyone to disobedience so that He may have *mercy* on them all.\(^{46}\)

God’s purpose of election, which is anchored in God’s mercy, is interwoven throughout the whole of Romans 9-11 as the crucial point in Paul’s argument. The reason is that divine election is grounded purely in God’s free and sovereign exercise of mercy.\(^{47}\) Hence, the doctrine of election must be examined in terms of God’s mercy. As aforementioned, modern scholarship has pointed to the *basis* of mercy, God’s being and nature of mercy as one of the keys to interpreting Romans 9. The following section will confer on the *extent* of His mercy—how God exercises His mercy to the hardened, the vessels of wrath and the non-elect.

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\(^{46}\) Emphasis added.

The Extent of His Mercy to the Hardened

The hardening of Pharaoh’s heart\(^{48}\) is set within and undergirded by the context of God’s mercy and compassion. In fact before Paul talks about the hardening of Pharaoh’s heart, he begins by anchoring on God’s favor, quoting Ex. 33:19. In commenting on the two focal words used by Moses in this quotation, Calvin wrote:

The first is חנן, chenen, which means to favor or to show kindness freely and bountifully; the other is רחם rechem, which is to be treated with mercy. Thus is confirmed what Paul intended, that the mercy of God, being gratuitous, is under no restraint, but turns wherever it pleases.\(^{49}\)

The indisputable fact is that God bestows mercy and grace on both Moses and Pharaoh, only at different levels and in different spheres. Moses needed God’s mercy in leading a stubborn and rebellious people called out by God, while Pharaoh also experienced God’s mercy in various forms of warning, time and again, in spite of his stubbornness in resisting God’s call for him to release God’s people from tyrannical slavery. Lenski substantiates this, arguing, “The only hardening that is effected by God and which the Scriptures are acquainted with is judicial; the only objects of this hardening are men who have first hardened themselves against all God’s mercy and have done that to such an extent as to be beyond further reach of that mercy.”\(^{50}\) Though the argument of Lenski is an interpretation and says more than what Paul has penned, our attention should be drawn to the following perspectives in the citation. First, Paul could be hinting that the unbelieving

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\(^{48}\) Owen notes: “Much has been unnecessarily written on this subject of hardening. Pharaoh is several times said to have hardened his own heart, and God is said also several times to have hardened him too. The Scripture in many instances makes no minute distinctions, for these may be easily gathered from the general tenor of its teaching” (Calvin, Romans, 362, note).

\(^{49}\) Calvin, Romans, 356-57. Erasmus also comments, “No one is condemned except by his own guilt. No one is saved except by the kindness of God” (Erasmus, Paraphrases, 55).

\(^{50}\) Lenski, Romans, 616.
Israelites should see ‘Pharaoh’ in their own hearts. In a sense, Ishmael, Esau, and Pharaoh each represent children “of the flesh” (Rom. 9:6–9) in their individual lives. Consequently, Paul seems to be “name switching,” whereby the name of God’s people becomes associated with the name of the wicked, or even God’s enemy, for the purpose of rebuke and correction. Second, the mercy that God has shown to Pharaoh in no way warrants placing Pharaoh “in Christ”. Paul’s point is that the God who has mercy on whomever He wills, can also have mercy on the “Pharaohs” of the world; and indeed will do so. However, in talking about Israel and the promises made to Israel (and the realization that he would have the Gentiles to be “in Christ”), Paul does not indicate that God’s mercy, which potentially mitigates the hardening of Israel (Rom. 11:25-32), necessarily implies that it will further mitigate the hardening of Pharaoh or the “Pharaohs” of the world. Therefore, in the third place, the concern of the readers must focus on God’s being and His nature of mercy (τὸῦ ἐλεοῦντος θεοῦ, 9:16) rather than be restricted by personal situations. Karl Barth quips,

It was perhaps the decisive exegetical error of the classical doctrine of predestination that—being more concerned about the things of men (although not to their advantage) than the things of God—it thought to see the scope of Rom. 9:18 in the personal situation and destiny of Moses and Pharaoh (as of Rom. 9:6f. in that of the different sons of Abraham and Isaac).

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51 Paul uses “harden” at Romans 11:7 and 25 to speak of Israel’s blindness and hardening. Both God and the prophets addressed them as a “stiff-necked” and “rebellious” people (Ex. 32:9; 33:3-5; Deut. 31:27; Neh. 9:17, 29; Jer. 19:15). Nevertheless, God’s unstinting love and unswerving mercy continued to pursue and overflow.

52 Interestingly, in the II Kings 17:7-23 commentary on the reasons for Israel’s exile, the author uses no fewer than 23 different Hebrew verbs (in a total of 33 verbs used) in describing the stubbornness of Israel’s hardened heart, especially under the theme of God’s election as she was brought out of Egypt from under the power of Pharaoh.

53 Oropeza’s term “name-switching” implies a one-way switching and not a mutual exchange. Pharaoh could be said to be a kind of synecdoche for those children “of the flesh” (Oropeza, God’s Justice and Faithfulness in Romans 9-11, 68).

54 “Isaianic text calls rebellious Israel ‘Sodom’ in Isa 1.10, a context Paul no doubt read when he cites Isa 1.9 in relation to Israel’s current unbelief (Rom 9.29–32) . . . Consequently, Paul seems to be following the Isaianic example of name-switching whereby the name of God’s people becomes associated with the name of God’s enemy” (ibid.).

55 CD II/2:221.
Forlines’s opinion is that the word “harden” is carefully chosen in this context.\textsuperscript{56}

Hardness, while not to be taken lightly, does not necessarily imply that a person is in a hopeless condition;\textsuperscript{57} and divine hardening is not always final and forever, as we see for example in the mystery of God’s merciful plan\textsuperscript{58} in the hardening of Israel (11:25-32). Piper acknowledges, “This does not imply that the condition sometimes called hardness of heart (Eph. 4:18) or mind (2 Cor. 3:14) cannot be altered by the merciful revivifying act of God (Eph. 2:1-4).”\textsuperscript{59} In view of that, if one can only know this mystery of God’s merciful plan, one will be less likely to succumb to the temptation of dogmatically drawing a fast line between the destinies of the elect and the non-elect, as in the classical doctrine of predestination.

**The Extent of His Mercy to the Vessels of Wrath**

Even if Paul did not clearly and directly identify who\textsuperscript{60} the vessels of wrath\textsuperscript{61} are, it is imperative to reflect on the phrase in the context in which he has placed it. It could very well be that Paul is referring to the unbelieving Israelites epitomized by the Gentile Pharaoh. However, at this particular point of the text, Paul’s emphasis is not on the “true identity”

\textsuperscript{57} In the parable of the vineyard (Lk. 13:6-9), Jesus asserts that within God’s uncompromising judgment there is mercy, which gives renewed hope to the condemned and unfruitful fig tree. This unfruitful fig tree could very well represent the elect Israel.
\textsuperscript{58} Cranfield, *Romans: a Shorter Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1985), 280.
\textsuperscript{61} The word “wrath” does not refer specifically to an emotion in God but denotes the situation created by human defiance of the divine will (Bryne, Romans, 302). Emil Brunner further comments, “The metaphor must not be pressed; God is not a potter and man is not a lump of clay. Thus Paul does not want to say that God has made men as vessels of wrath. He is speaking of Israel, and God has certainly not made Israel for wrath. But by its disobedience . . . Israel has become a vessel of God’s wrath . . . Whoever has fallen under his wrath through disobedience, him he prepares for destruction. ‘Ready for destruction’ does not, however, mean ‘made for destruction’, and being a vessel of wrath does not imply having been made in or for wrath.” See Emil Brunner, *The Letter to the Romans: A Commentary*, trans. H. A. Kennedy (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1959), 87.
issue but rather on God’s abundant longsuffering (or great patience, πολλῇ μακροθυμίᾳ, 9:22), so as to proclaim the riches of His glory for the vessels of mercy (9:23). Insightfully, Barth maintains that “wrath” is not the final word of God. “God’s sentence of rejection on Israel is not a final word, not the whole Word of God, but only the foreword to God’s promise of His glory later to be revealed on this shadow-Israel . . . Indirectly the real witnesses of the wrath of God are necessarily also witnesses of His mercy.”

Barth further applies his observation that “God’s mercy is to be found in God’s wrath” to the Gentiles as well, lest one interpret too narrowly the implication of Paul’s discourse in Romans 9:6-23, particularly his quotations from Hosea (vv. 25-26) and from Isaiah (vv. 27-29).

Unequivocally, Paul’s discussion of the potter and the clay here is not about Israel and only Israel, but extends to all humanity. Barth believes that its pregnant wording obviously says:

There are called and gathered into the Church not just a few “vessels of mercy,” a few Jews who as children of Abraham, as heirs of Israel’s distinction and endowment described in vv. 4-5, seem to have the exclusive claim to this and to justify this claim by their faith. No, called and gathered with them and justified by the same faith there is a whole abundance of manifest “vessels of wrath,” a horde from among the Gentiles, from the realm of Moab and Ammon, of Egypt and Assyria—the very realm into which the whole of that hardened Israel (beginning with Ishmael and ending with the kings and people of Samaria but ultimately also with the Davidic kings and Jerusalem itself) seems to be thrust out by God’s harsh dealing with His elected people. On the ground of the divine calling, says v. 24, the former and the latter together form the Church, vessels of mercy at the end and goal of the history of Israel, witnesses to the resurrection of Jesus Christ, recipients and instruments of the Holy Spirit, possessors of the “riches of the glory” of God (v. 23).

God’s mercy, then, is latent and to be found in His wrath. Luther makes a comparable dialectic feature between ira severitatis (the wrath of severity) and ira

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62 CD, II/2:227.
63 Ibid., 228.
misericordiae (the wrath of mercy). The impenitent find only the severity of the wrath of God, while the penitent recognize the merciful intention behind the wrath of God, in that it is intended to bring them to repentance, humility, and faith in order to receive the grace of God. That is the reason why Habakkuk, knowing well that the elect nation deserves God’s stern judgment and banishment because of their great wickedness, persists in praying for the mitigation of God’s wrath, as shown by the plea “in wrath remember mercy” (Hab. 3:2). In deploring their own evil ways, the prophet earnestly implores God to restore them as the vessels of His mercy.

In the interpretation of the potter and clay metaphor, it is crucial to see that in Paul’s Old Testament sources, the twofold action of the potter does not by any means take place along parallel lines, or in symmetry and equilibrium. Barth cogently asserts:

Without prejudice to the seriousness of the divine purpose on both sides, the relationship between the two sides of the one divine action is one of supreme incongruity, supreme a-symmetry, supreme disequilibrium. The light of the divine willing and the shadow of the powerful divine non-willing are indeed related at this point, but they are necessarily governed by an irreversible sequence and order. “For his anger endureth but a moment; his favour a lifetime” (Ps. 30:5). “For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment, but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee” (Is. 54:7f.). “For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him . . . As for man, his days are as grass; as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more. But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting . . . and his righteousness unto children's children” (Ps. 103:11f.). This is the relationship between the two courses of action followed by the potter, the God of Israel. A failure to recognize this relationship is the error of the question of [Rom. 9] v. 20a.

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64 Cf. Ps. 2:12 and 141:5 (WA 3.69.24).
66 Paul’s argument in vv. 21-24 is hypothetical; it does not say that God really did predestine certain people to destruction (Watson, *Beyond the New Perspective*, 164).
67 *CD*, II/2:224.
Moreover, Wagner identifies an important connotation of the metaphor of God as potter in the Book of Isaiah, as it likewise reveals God as Israel’s maker, which implies a far more intimate relationship:

This is the language of election. Indeed, Isaiah 45:10 offers a metaphor parallel to that of potter and clay in which God is likened to Israel’s father and mother. Similarly, 45:11 God calls Israel not only “the works of my hands,” but also “my sons and my daughters.” For God to call himself Israel’s maker is to reaffirm that they belong specially to him, and he to them.

In other words, the wrath of God in the metaphor of the potter reveals far more the passion of His mercy and refocuses on the extent of His purpose of grace. Accordingly, “God exercised this longsuffering because of His immense purpose of mercy,” reluctant in punishment, wanting to bring His people to repentance. The purpose of God’s great endurance is not to withhold mercy for their doom but to extend it, mercy upon mercy, for their salvation (9:27-29; 11:30, 31).

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68 “In 44:2, the reminder to Israel that God is the one who ‘made you’ and ‘formed you from the womb’ is sandwiched between two designations of Israel as ‘the one whom I have chosen,’ 44:1, [2]” (Wagner, *Isaiah and Paul in Concert in the Letter to the Romans*, n.77, 66).
69 Ibid., 66.
71 “The patience of God, his reluctance to punish sinners, is stressed in several passages; among them being Rom. 2:4-see p. 90; Gen. 6:3b; 18:26-32; Exod. 34:6; 1 Ki. 21:29; Neh. 9:17b; Ps. 86:15; 10:8-14; 145:8, 9; Isa. 5:1-4; Ezek. 18:23, 32; 33:11; Lk.13:6-9; Rev. 2:21” (Hendriksen, *Romans*, 328). The Parable of the Lost Son (Lk. 15: 11-32) is another illustration of God’s mercy and compassion to the vessel of wrath (ὀργή). The elder brother was angry or wrathful against his lost brother (ὀργίζω Lk. 15:28) because his brother had squandered his father’s property with the prostitutes and in wild living. However, his father was filled with compassion (σπλαγχνιζομαι, Lk. 15:20) for his lost son; he ran to him and threw his arms around him and kissed him (v. 20).
The Extent of His Mercy to the Non-Elect

The extent of God’s mercy to the Gentiles is pronounced emphatically in the Old Testament. Within the context of mercy and God’s covenantal election, Solomon’s prayer at the temple dedication contains a plea for the Lord to hear from heaven and bless the foreigners who do not belong to God’s people Israel, but who have come from a distant land because of their faith and have prayed toward the Lord’s temple (1 Ki. 8:41-43). God’s prophet Isaiah also declares in a similar context,

Don’t let foreigners who commit themselves to the Lord say, “The Lord will never let me be part of his people.” . . . I will also bless the foreigners who commit themselves to the Lord, who serve him and love his name, who worship him and do not desecrate the Sabbath day of rest, and who hold fast to my covenant.

It is interesting to observe that when Paul quotes Scripture from Hosea to authenticate God’s extra measure of mercy extended to the Israelites, he intentionally quotes it in a way that denies the literal sense of Hosea 2:25, which actually refers not to the Gentiles but to the Israelites. The question is “why did Paul take a passage which clearly prophesies the restoration for His people and apply it to the Gentiles?” Barth believes that Paul’s approach is that of an argument from the greater to the lesser (a maiori ad minus). “If God's mercy is so rich and powerful even upon Gentiles who were standing wholly under His curse and sentence of rejection, how much more so upon those to whom He has already promised it!”

Hendriksen expands further:

[The] same principle operates throughout. Whether it be restoration to divine favor of Israelites, or conversion of Gentiles, or even both, the cause or source

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73 The term “non-elect” is not a biblical term. This term is coined to identify the large set of individuals, groups, and nations who are not members of the people of Israel, God’s elect (נָחַץ Deut. 7:7), and who are outside of God’s covenantal promises. For a good treatment of this term, please refer to “The Non-Elect in the Hebrew Bible” in Kaminsky, Yet I loved Jacob, 121-36.
74 Isa. 56:3, 6 (NLT).
75 CD II/2:231.
of restoration and salvation in each case is the same. That which brings about the restoration or conversion is ever the active, powerful, and sovereign grace of God Almighty! . . . What is stressed in these quotations is the sovereign and pitying grace of God shown to those who—whether Jews or Gentiles—lack the right to consider themselves God’s people.\footnote{William Hendriksen, \textit{Romans} (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1980), 331.}

The surprising reversal of Paul’s text actually magnifies and accentuates Paul’s argument that God’s grace is far wider than anyone could have dared to imagine\footnote{Bruce, \textit{Romans}, 180.} or preconceive.\footnote{The familiar parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk. 10) is an example where the “non-elect” (Samaritan) is cited as one who truly expresses God’s mercy, and thus is elected—to “inherit eternal life” (10:25). Meanwhile the priest and the Levite, who belong to the elect Israel, are denounced as unworthy of their election because they fail to show mercy, which is an attribute of God’s character.} God, through His mercy, chooses those who were considered as excluded in order to put an end to exclusion.\footnote{Jesus clearly demonstrates the extent of God’s mercy to the non-elect in the \textit{Parable of the Great Banquet} (Lk. 14:15-24).} Wagner expresses masterfully this extension of God’s mercy to the non-elect:

Paul’s hermeneutic of reversal necessitates a radical rereading of texts foundational to Israel’s understanding of election. Projected through this interpretive lens, Hosea’s moving depiction of God’s passionate commitment to his people Israel is refracted and refocused into a prophecy of the “riches of God’s glory” now showered upon Gentile “vessels of mercy.”\footnote{Wagner, \textit{Isaiah and Paul in Concert in the Letter to the Romans}, 83.}

The extent of God’s mercy to the hardened, the vessels of wrath and the non-elect, has conclusively demonstrated the unbounded and incomprehensible mercy of God. In Romans 9, Paul must have consciously considered himself as one belonging to the vessels of wrath. Before his encounter with Christ, his heart was hardened as he persecuted the followers of Christ violently (Gal. 1:13, cf. Acts 9).\footnote{Oropeza, “God’s Justice and Faithfulness in Romans 9-11,” 71.} In fact, there exists a notable parallel between Romans 9:16-26 and 1 Timothy 1:12-17.\footnote{Commentators and interpreters of the Pastoral Epistles (I & II Timothy and Titus) up until the nineteenth century almost unanimously accept Paul’s authorship for these epistles. For erudite discussions in the debate concerning Paul’s authorship, please refer to George W. Knight, \textit{The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Greek Text} (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publ. Co., 1992), 13-52; Hendriksen, \textit{I-II Timothy and Titus}.} First, both passages draw attention to the
“mercy” of God (Rom. 9:18, 23 and 1 Tim. 1:13, 16) directed towards the undeserving sinners. Second, the word “harden” in Romans 9:18, which describes Pharaoh’s heart as he fiercely pursues the Israelites in order to enslave them, is comparable to the word “persecutor” in 1 Timothy 1:13, which connotes pursuit and enslavement. Third, Paul also uses “dishonor” (Rom. 9:21) to describe the vessels of shame, deemed as degraded and vile. Such terminology has a close link with the word “violent” (1 Tim. 1:13), describing wanton behavior or a shameful act. Fourth, “Not my people” (Rom. 9:25) comes from Hosea 2:23, in a context which formerly refers to the Israelites’ spiritual adultery that brought blasphemy to God’s name (Rom. 2:24). Such a text may connect to “blasphemer” in 1 Timothy 1:13. Fifth, the “vessel of wrath” (Rom. 9:22) is analogous to “the worst of sinners” (1 Tim. 1:15); while “great patience” (Rom. 9:22) corresponds to “unlimited patience” (1 Tim. 1:16). Finally, Paul mentions the word “glory” in both passages (Rom. 9:23 and 1 Tim. 1:17), whereby the riches of His grace are made known and thus all praise and honor belong to the God of mercy. Doubtless, from the correspondences between these two texts, Paul has left us the indelible message that God has extended His mercy to the hardened, the vessels of wrath and the non-elect, among whom Paul considers himself as a chief candidate.

If God’s mercy awaits Paul so abundantly, would God not likewise await the rest of

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83 Διόκτης from διόκειο
84 Ἀτυμία meaning disgrace, dishonour, reproach, shame, or vileness.
85 Ὑβριστής from ὑβρίζω meaning to behave insolently, wantonly, and shamefully.
86 Πολλὴ μακροθυμία.
87 Πάσαν μακροθυμίαν.
88 The intentionality of Paul might not necessarily dwell on the direct connection between the two texts, but rather on the “metaphorical precepts” and the personal testimony of the two texts to highlight the abundant mercy and unlimited patience of God for those who were considered “the worst of sinners.”
humanity with His infinite grace and divine mercy? Admittedly, God’s election for Paul can only be explained in the context of the wideness of God’s mercy.89

The Cross of Christ the Son in the Connection between Jacob and Esau

The third facet in the Trinitarian economic perspective of Romans 9 focuses on the connection between Jacob and Esau. The chiastic structure outlined by Watson calls our attention to the vital pairing of Jacob and Esau. What then is the significance of this pairing and what hermeneutical insight might we draw from their relationship? What does this pairing, represented by their progeny, denote historically such that it can facilitate our consideration of Paul’s view of election in Romans 9?

Before we look into this connection, we need to address the figural reading of Sarah and Hagar in Galatians 4 and see if it has any analogous “electing” thread with the reading of Jacob and Esau’s pairing. In defending the faithfulness and trustworthiness of God’s word, Paul brings God’s election process into discussion. Paul states that God is at work among His children of “promise,” which may or may not be the same as the “natural” children of Abraham. For example in the pairing of Isaac and Ishmael, both are true sons of Abraham: Ishmael by Hagar, and Isaac by Sarah. The difference is that Ishmael was born after the flesh at the mere request of Sarah, while Isaac was born according to the promise of God’s covenant (Gen. 15:2-5; cf. 17:2-7; 18:10). Paul advances the same argument and amplifies it into an allegory90 in Gal. 4:22-31.91 Through allegory, Paul brings out the spiritual truth

90 An allegory is a symbolic expression, through certain characters and/or actions, of a deeper meaning not visible on the surface of the story/text. The verb to interpret allegorically (Gk. Allēgorin) comes from the conflation of the Greek words in the phrase to say something else (Gk. allo agoreuein) (Betz, Galatians, 243; Soards & Pursiful, Galatians, 219). A parable paints a picture in order to aid in presenting some facts, but allegory does the reverse; it takes a fact (a Biblical account) and turns it into a picture of something else. Cf.
which is inherent in the related Genesis account and sketches a picture of two women representing two covenants of law and grace.

There are two correlations that can be drawn between Galatians 4 and Romans 9. The first is the correlation between the barren Sarah (Gal. 4:27) and the failed word of God (Rom. 9:6). When God made His covenant with Abraham (Gen. 15:2-5, 18), Sarah was still barren. The promise that their offspring would be as numerous as the stars in heaven resonates with the theme of hopelessness. Likewise in Romans 9, people were wondering what had happened to God’s covenantal relationship with Israel as His treasured possession (Deut. 7:6; 14:2; Mal. 3:17). Many Israelites were still outside God’s salvation, as if God’s word had failed or was “barren.” The second correlation occurs between Sarah and Hagar on one hand (Gal. 4:22-23) and the Isaac and Ishmael pairing on the other (Rom. 9:7-8). These two pairings serve as an appropriate vehicle for sharpening the polemic in Jewish self-understanding\textsuperscript{92} of the differences between the covenant of law and the covenant of promise or of grace.\textsuperscript{93}

The implication of the figural reading of Sarah and Hagar (even Isaac and Ishmael) for the argument of Paul is twofold. In the first place, it reinforces the doctrine of grace in the divine election process because Isaac was born, against all hope (Rom. 4:17-19), out of “God’s miraculous grace revealed in creative life.”\textsuperscript{94} Nevertheless, God is very much in control in carrying out His promises, both in the case of Sarah’s barrenness and in Israel’s

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\textsuperscript{93} Dunn’s reading of the two covenants maintains that Paul is referring to two ways of understanding the one covenantal purpose of God through Abraham and for his seed (Gal. 4:25-26), because strictly speaking God never made a covenant with Ishmael (Gen. 17:18-21) (Dunn, \textit{Galatians}, 249).

\textsuperscript{94} Tenny, \textit{Galatians}, 143-44.
unbelief, in ways that are not immediately observable. Thus, divine election depends on God’s transforming power in quickening the reprobate sinners “εἰς ἐαυτόν ἐλθὼν” (Lk. 15:17) and making them alive with Christ by grace (Eph. 2: 1-5). Dunn concludes that what Paul is emphasizing is that the Abrahamic covenant, seen in terms of freedom and promise, “is a fuller expression of God’s electing grace and a fuller embodiment of the ongoing divine will than the Abraham covenant seen in terms of law and flesh.”

In the second place, the figural reading of Sarah and Hagar is significant for Isaac and Ishmael insofar as it points to the cross of Christ both through the promised covenant (Gal. 5; Jer. 31:31-34; 1 Cor. 11:25, cf. 2 Cor. 3:6, 14 and Heb. 8:6-13) and the story of Abraham’s offering up his son Isaac on Mount Moriah (Gen. 22). The story of Abraham’s offering of Isaac provides at least two typologies that are related to Christ: (1) He is the Lamb of God (Gen. 22:8; Jn. 1:29, 36; Isa. 53:7; 1 Pet. 1:19; Rev. 5:6), and (2) He is the Seed of Abraham (Gen. 22:18; Gal. 3:16, cf. Acts 3:25-26). Both of these types directly and indirectly associate Christ with His suffering on the cross to take away the sin of the world. Perhaps the best association between these pairings and the cross is found in Paul’s exposition of the “freedom in Christ” (Gal. 5:11) and the bondage of legalism, which was symbolized by circumcision (Gal. 6:12, 14).

Furthermore, when Paul says that he boasts in the cross of Christ (6:14), he is declaring that the cross is not a symbol of shame (5:11, σκάνδαλον, scandal) nor of a curse (6:12, 3:13), but of freedom and glory represented by the figural Sarah (4:26, cf. 5:1).

95 Dunn, Galatians, 249.
96 Hagar and Sarah represent two covenants, law and freedom respectively. Law is linked to circumcision, while freedom is linked to the cross.
97 Paul refers in Rom. 11:27 to this covenant, which is made with literal Israel and Judah, not with the spiritual Israel (Jer. 31:31; 33:8; 50:20; Mic. 7:18).
98 In teaching the Lord’s Supper (1 Cor. 11:25), as Paul recounts the events of the night before Jesus’ crucifixion, he relates the cup to the promised new covenant and the shed blood of Christ’s works on the cross.
As aforementioned, one of the main distinctions between Isaac and Ishmael is that Isaac was a child of promise and Ishmael was born of the flesh. As such, if Isaac was a child of promise, strictly speaking, Esau then was also a child of promise, no different from his brother, Jacob. Yet Scripture reveals that between Jacob and Esau, there is still a division of a weaker and greater one, differentiated by God loving one and hating the other. What could be Paul’s foremost emphasis in delineating such division? Additionally, how is the analogous principle of God’s purpose in election established as the descendants of Jacob and the descendants of Esau continue to fulfill their separate yet intertwined roles and destinies? In fact, how does the theme of reconciliation between Jacob, the chosen, and Esau, the non-chosen, signify the central role of the cross? Convincingly, Paul’s use of the Jacob-Esau pairing underscores that both choices originate in God’s inscrutable wisdom and promote His salvific will.

The Christ as the Central Figure

Most traditional commentators, including Calvin, dwell on the literal implication of the words found in 9:10-13 and conclude with the doctrine of double predestination. However, the word ‘hate’ as quoted by Paul within this text does not necessarily imply the fate of the non-elect as explained in Calvin’s doctrine of double predestination. Rather, it

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99 Some rabbinic texts such as Str-B, 3.269, mention that Esau is excluded from future reward (Moo, Romans, 586). Philo writes that Esau “typifies the bad man or vice, in pursuit of the passions or bodily lusts.” See Ronald Williamson, Philo and the Epistle to the Hebrews (Brill Academic Publishers, Netherlands, 1970), 263. In Heb. 12:6, the readers are warned not to “become like Esau, an immoral and godless person,” and this would seem to suggest that Paul takes the same viewpoint here in Romans 9 in bringing up the contrasting pair. It is perhaps in this context, not mentioning the deceptiveness and duplicity of Jacob, that the theme of God’s pursuing mercy shines out with even greater intensity.

100 Election (ἐκλογή) is used elsewhere by Paul in referring to an act of choosing (1 Thess. 1:4; Rom. 11:5, 28) or to those who are elected (Rom. 11:7). Observably, Paul’s usage of election in Romans 9 refers to the act of choosing and “lays emphasis on the free decision of God” (Schrenk, “ἐκλέγομαι,” 179). The main point in regard to the doctrine of election according to Paul in Rom. 9:10-13 is that both “external theocracy” (Hodge, Romans, 309) and eternal salvation are to be found in God and God alone, and not in natural descent or covenant with Abraham, nor are they linked with any good works.

reflects a Semitic way of expressing a choice made for one party over another. Kaminsky points out that Scripture repeatedly attests to the fact that the non-elect (foreigners) are included in God’s blessings:

The patriarchs all marry Mesopotamian spouses; Judah marries a Canaanite woman (Gen 38:2); Joseph, an Egyptian named Asenath (Gen 41:45); and Moses, a Midianite or Cushite woman (Exod 2; 18; Num 12). Although never clearly stated, it appears that the text views all of these women favorably, perhaps suggesting that they obtained Israelite credentials simply by marrying an Israelite man. Later, Ruth the Moabitess marries an Israelite man and gives birth to King David’s ancestor, in spite of the prohibition in Deut 23:4-7 (Eng. 3-6).

The thrust of Romans 9 is that God, in His sovereign will, chose to enter into a covenant relationship with Jacob and his descendants, rather than with Esau and his offspring, to the end that they might be a light and a channel of God’s salvific grace to the nations. This does not mean that all Jacob’s descendants would be “elected” (Rom 9:6) or that all Esau’s descendants would inevitably be “rejected.” The “hate” against Esau does not mean that all of his descendants are forbidden entirely from entering into a redeemed relationship with God by faith. Deuteronomy prescribes, “Do not abhor an Edomite, for he is your brother . . . The third generation of children born to them may enter the assembly of the LORD” (Deut. 23:7, 8 NKJV). Even the curse against the Moabites (Deut 23:3) did not keep Ruth, a Moabite, (or even Rahab, a harlot) from being brought into the ancestry line of Christ, the elect Man.

102 Bryne, Romans, 295. An example of this expression is Christ’s comment that “if anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children . . . even his own life, he cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:26).
103 Kaminsky, Yet I Loved Jacob, 124.
104 Ibid., 127.
Primarily, Paul’s crucial point here is not that Esau, or even Ishmael, was headed for damnation.\textsuperscript{105} What Paul is stressing is that Isaac and Jacob were made instruments “so that God’s purpose of election might stand” (9:11). In other words, God chose one particular lineage for a special task;\textsuperscript{106} that task was to show that “the history of redemption runs through the generations of Jacob and not Esau.”\textsuperscript{107} Kaminsky maintains that from a priestly perspective, the task that comes with Israel’s election is quite literally an election for divine service.\textsuperscript{108} Barth stipulates that even though Ishmael and Esau were set aside in this selection process, they were not forsaken, but rather allowed to share in the special care and guidance of the electing God (Gen. 21; Gen. 36 and 1 Chron. 1).\textsuperscript{109} Godet expresses his concern about marginalizing one’s spiritual destiny based on ancestry or national affiliation: “The national character inherited from the father of the race is not so impressed on his descendants that they cannot escape it. As there were in Israel many Edomites, profane hearts, there may also have been, as has been said, many Israelites, many spiritual hearts, in Edom.”\textsuperscript{110} Scripturally, the prophetic curse and condemnation pronounced against the Edomites are not considered wholesale, nor are they the final word as indicated in Amos 9:11, 12 and alluded to in Acts 15:15-17. In the Acts passage, James, in quoting from Amos 9, is stating that though the Edomites and the Gentile nations were often viewed as God’s foes and deserving of eternal

\textsuperscript{105} The Edomites were never beyond God’s compassion and they too were recipients of God’s Word (Obad. 19, 21; Amos 9:12). Cf. Walter C. Kaiser, Malachi: God’s Unchanging Love (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1984), 441; Charles Lee Feinberg, Malachi: Formal Worship (New York: American Board of Missions to the Jews, 1951), 103; Richard A. Taylor and E. Ray Clendenen, Haggai, Malachi (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2004), 252; Barth, Romans, 357; Edwards, Romans, 234; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, Romans: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 558; Godet, Romans, 351; Reasoner, Romans in Full Circle, 108; CD, II/2:218, 224.


\textsuperscript{107} Brunner, Romans, 85.

\textsuperscript{108} Kaminsky, Yet I Loved Jacob, 97.

\textsuperscript{109} CD, II/2:217.

\textsuperscript{110} Frédéric Louis Godet, Commentary on Romans (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1977), 351.
The extinction of adult males is a prominent idea in God’s judgment against the sins and wickedness of the Edomites. However, this verse also implies the promise of mercy to Esau in God’s goodness (as there was to Moab, Jer. 48:47, and Ammon, Jer. 49:6), insofar as this verse also entreats their orphans and widows to trust and rest their hope in God alone.

Though Acts 15:19 does not mention the Edomites specifically, the general category “remnant of men” and “nations/Gentiles” implies their inclusion.

The subjugation of Edom and other nations to “David” means that they will be made into citizens of the kingdom of God, to whom the Lord shall manifest Himself as their God, and pour upon them all the blessings of His covenant of grace (Isa. 56:6-8). Cf. C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, Biblical Commentary on The Old Testament: The Twelve Minor Prophets, trans. James Martin (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publ. Co., 1967), I:332.

“Bearing the name of God” is said of those who are adorers and worshippers of God (Cf. Isa. 56:6).

“Though God had called Jacob, not Esau (Edom), for election-service, both nations were obliged to walk in righteousness before God. Yet Edom had been ‘immoral’ and ‘godless,’ as both testaments testify (Gen. 25:32; 36:1-8; Heb. 12:16). God’s love demanded that He punish Edom for her sin, for had He abandoned Edom, there would have been no reason to use His justice as a way of calling Edom back to Himself” (Kaiser, Malachi, 442).

CD, II/2.224.
In addition, Paul’s allusion to Christ as the central figure of the purpose of God’s election in verses 1 and 5 ("the truth in Christ" and "the human ancestry of Christ") must not be overlooked hermeneutically. In fact the whole pericope of Rom. 9-11 points to Christ as the center of Paul’s argument.\(^{117}\)

We observe further that in Rom. 9-11 each one of the Christological statements depict[s] Jesus Christ in a special relation not only to the church but also to Israel. The functions which are here attributed to Jesus Christ, especially the emphasis set on his original, present and future relation to Israel (Jacob, or Zion), deserve special attention.\(^{118}\)

Similarly, in Rom. 10:4 Paul argues that Christ took the destiny of both Israel and humanity all on Himself.\(^{119}\) Although the name of Christ is not directly mentioned in the preceding texts (9:10-13),\(^{120}\) this allusion to Christ and His cross is apparent through the Esau and Jacob connection.\(^{121}\) Here we see illuminated the surpassing mystery of God’s election,

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\(^{117}\) Cf. Watson’s chiastic arrangement within the three pairs of God’s election process and purpose, laid out in three pairs of contrasting figures in page 150.

\(^{118}\) Markus Barth, *The People of God*, 32. “The occurrence of the formula ‘in Christ’ in Rom. 9:1 means more than support for an oath; it signals clearly that the following discourse cannot be understood except on the basis of its Christological affirmations. To be ‘outcast from Christ’ would be, according to 9:3, the worst fate Paul can imagine. The advent of Israel’s Messiah and the significance of this event is noted in various ways: ‘his natural descent’ is from the Israelites (9:5); he has come to reveal the sense, the unity, the purpose, and, above all, the fulfillment of the Law (10:4); he is the ‘stone of stumbling’ which was rejected in Zion (9:33); he is the life-giving word, the substance of faith and confession, the invoked Lord who is present wherever his people assemble (10:5-18); allusions to his crucifixion are made in 9:33 and 11:3; his resurrection is explicitly mentioned in 10:9; finally, he is the deliverer of Jacob who will come from Zion (11:26b). Perhaps Jesus Christ is called ‘God’ in 9:5; certainly in 10:9 he is designated by the divine title ‘Lord.’ All of these sentences proclaim Christ who is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Heb. 13:8); the one who is, was, and is to come (Rev. 1:8, 17-18; 22:13). His past, present, and future cannot be separated from one another when his work is described” (ibid.)


\(^{120}\) Ambrosiaster read the announcement of the birth of Isaac as the prefiguring of Christ. “For this is what the promise said, *About this time I will return and Sarah shall have a son.* This is how Genesis reads (Gen 18:10). Christ fulfilled what is here prefigured. The promise was that the coming Christ would be a son of Abraham and that all the nations of the earth would be blessed in the Christ who fulfilled the promise. This promise was made to Abraham when he heard, *by your offspring shall all the nations of the earth gain blessing for themselves* (Gen 22:18). He was promised that Christ would come from the line of Isaac. We now see this promise fulfilled in him” (Burns and Newman, *Romans*, 222). Barrett comments, “It is important to recall here that the seed of Abraham contracted till it became ultimately Christ, and was subsequently expanded to include those who were in Christ . . . (cf. Gal. iii. 29)” (Barrett, *Romans*, 183).

\(^{121}\) The key point in the connection between Esau and Jacob does not imply that Esau and his descendants are subsequently “loved” by God. Neither does it dwell on the assumption that election to salvation is individual
which is far richer than the disputation over individual fate or salvation;\(^{122}\) and it is even more profound than simply claiming that reprobation is part of “an act of predestination”\(^{123}\) within the hidden eternal decree of God.

**The Cross as the Pinnacle of God’s Purpose in Election**

How does the story of Jacob and Esau draw attention to God’s election purpose? Here lies the existential focus in divine predestination. In Romans 9:12-13, Paul writes, “not by works but by him who calls—she was told, ‘The greater will serve the weaker.’ Just as it is written: ‘Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.’ ” Augustine teaches from these verses that God’s foreknowledge and grace preceded faith and merit:

> God did not elect anyone’s work by foreknowledge, but rather by foreknowledge he chose faith, so that he chooses precisely him whom he foreknew would believe in him, and to him he gives the Holy Spirit, so that by doing good works he will as well attain eternal life . . . Moreover, the nature of grace is such that the call precedes merit, through whom he can do good works.”\(^{124}\)

Calvin on the other hand dwells on the predestination to election and reprobation of individuals: “As the blessing of the covenant separates the Israelitic nation from all other people, so the election of God makes a distinction between men in that nation, while he predestinates some to salvation, and others to eternal condemnation.”\(^{125}\) Besides the caution

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\(^{122}\) Moo takes the traditional Reformed approach in reading Rom. 9:11, 12: “This passage gives strong exegetical support to a traditional Calvinistic interpretation of God’s election: God chooses those who will be saved on the basis of his own will and not on the basis of anything—work or faith, whether foreseen or not—in those human beings so chosen” (Moo, *Romans*, 587).

\(^{123}\) Piper uses this phrase to describe the distinction, which God had predetermined, between Esau and Jacob before they were born (Piper, *Romans*, 51, 53).

\(^{124}\) Augustine, *Propositions from the Epistle to the Romans*, 33.

\(^{125}\) Calvin, *Romans*, 349.
of Owen\textsuperscript{126} to avoid going beyond the limits of revelation in these texts, Barth maintains that the discussion of “double predestination” here should dwell on the qualitative definition.\textsuperscript{127}

Now, this secret concerns not this or that man, but all man . . . When the Reformers applied the doctrine of election and rejection (Predestination) to the psychological unity of this or that individual, and when they referred quantitatively to the “elect” and the “damned”, they were, as we can now see, speaking mythologically. Paul did not think either quantitatively or psychologically, nor could he have done so, since his emphasis is set altogether upon God’s concern with the individual, and not upon the individual concern with God.\textsuperscript{128}

What Barth wants us to focus on in this passage is not the consequences of God’s selection process, but the faithfulness and the trustworthiness of God’s word, which has not failed (9:6, 11), and “the eternal victory of election over rejection, of love over hate, of life over death.”\textsuperscript{129} Lenski further comments on 9:13:

To introduce a physical subjection of Esau or a political subjection of Esau’s descendants to those of Jacob, is to go beyond Paul’s thought. What he presents is an example of pure, gratuitous promise, one that is taken from the history of Israel’s patriarchs, a beautiful illustration of the gratuitous bestowal of all the covenant gifts of God upon the Israelites (vv. 4, 5).\textsuperscript{130}

Additionally, when God announced to Rebecca that the older (greater) would serve the younger (weaker) even before the birth of the twins, it had to do with who would be the

\textsuperscript{126}John Owen (1788-1867), the editor of Calvin’s Romans commentary, cautions us about human reasoning in Calvin’s deduction in verse 11: “But to deduce it from what is said of Jacob and Esau, does not seem legitimate, inasmuch as they were in a fallen condition by nature, and the reference is evidently made to anything done personally by themselves. Election and reprobation most clearly presuppose man as fallen and lost: it is hence indeed, that the words derive their meaning. That it was God’s eternal purpose to choose some of man’s fallen race, and to leave others to perish, is clearly taught us: but this is a different question from the one touched upon here, — that this purpose was irrespective of man’s fall, — a sentiment which, as far as I can see, is not recognized nor taught in Scripture. And not only Calvin, but many other divines, both before and after him, seem to have gone in this respect somewhat beyond the limits of revelation; it is true, by a process of reasoning apparently obvious; but when we begin to reason on this high and mysterious subject, we become soon bewildered and lost in mazes of difficulties” (ibid. 9:11, n.1, 350).

\textsuperscript{127}Barth, Romans, 346.

\textsuperscript{128}Ibid., 347.

\textsuperscript{129}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{130}Lenski, Romans, 604; cf. also Chrysostom, Homilies Romans, 16.9.
true heir of the covenant of Abraham.  

This is clearly stated in the context of verse 4 regarding “the covenants” (cf. Gen.15:18; 17:2, 7, 9; Acts 3:25; Eph. 2:12) together with verse 8 regarding the “children of the promise who are regarded as Abraham’s offspring.” Interestingly, Paul brings out this word “covenant” once again in 11:27, indicating the fulfillment of God’s promise in His covenant with Abraham through the incarnation of the Son (Gal. 3:16, 29) for the propitiation of sin on the cross (Jer. 31:31-34; Heb. 8:10, 12). Paul then states his conclusion with certainty that God’s gifts and calling are irrevocable (11:29). Whether individually or corporately, in speaking of Jacob and Esau, “neither Genesis nor Malachi nor St. Paul have eternal salvation in view; the matter in question is the part they play regarded from the theocratic standpoint, as is proved by the word δουλεύειν, to serve.”

In fact, Esau as an individual never served Jacob. Therefore, the prophecy must not be applied literally with individual predestination but as dealing with the covenantal promise of God to the patriarchs (Rom. 9:4-5). Furthermore, the rejection of Esau that came in God’s verdict, “Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated,” was spoken long after Jacob and Esau had both passed from the earthly scene in the Book of Malachi 1:2, 3. Hence, Augustine’s views on foreknowledge and grace that precede belief and merit need not and cannot be applied in these two particular verses.

What then do these two verses entail? To better comprehend the implications of the acceptance of Jacob and rejection of Esau, it is necessary to move back to the history of the

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131 “By choosing Jacob/Israel . . . God also chose his descendants as his covenant people. It is a matter of OT covenant theology. The covenant representative on the one hand and the people/nation of Israel on the other hand are the focus of the divine covenantal election, and individuals are elect only as members of the elect people” (Archibald Thomas Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, IV, *The Epistles of Paul* (NY: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1931), 380. Being renewed often is a means of assurance and certification.


descendants of Jacob and Esau. According to Josephus, the descendants of Esau became known not only as the Edomites but also as Idumaeans.

After the death of Isaac, his sons divided their habitations respectively; nor did they retain what they had before; but Esau departed from the city of Hebron, and left it to his brother, and dwelt in Seir, and ruled over Idumea. He called the country by that name from himself, for he was named Adom; which appellation he got on the following occasion: One day returning from the toil of hunting very hungry, (it was when he was a child in age,) he lighted on his brother when he was getting ready lentil-pottage for his dinner, which was of a very red color; on which account he the more earnestly longed for it, and desired him to give him some of it to eat: but he made advantage of his brother’s hunger, and forced him to resign up to him his birthright; and he, being pinched with famine, resigned it up to him, under an oath. Whence it came, that, on account of the redness of this pottage, he was, in way of jest, by his contemporaries, called Adom, for the Hebrews call what is red Adom; and this was the name given to the country; but the Greeks gave it a more agreeable pronunciation, and named it Idumea.\(^{134}\)

Esau’s own life and the lives of his descendants clearly indicate that the earlier prophetic statement in Gen. 25:23 is in question. Esau and the Edomites soon became very powerful and prosperous. Genesis records that when Jacob was on his way home after a long absence, Esau met Jacob at Mahanaim along with 400 men; whereas Jacob had no one with him except his four wives, his children and some servants (Gen. 32, 33).\(^ {135}\) Notably inserted between the records of Jacob’s descendants in Genesis 35 and Genesis 37 is the record of the descendants of Esau in Genesis 36. Comparatively, the chapter on Genesis 36 portrays the prosperity of Esau’s descendants, both in exalted status (a full account of 40 rulers, chiefs and kings) and vastness of wealth (36:6, 7), while Genesis 37:1 and 2 narrate Jacob and his generations living in the land of Canaan as shepherds, who subsequently went to Egypt as slaves, then wandered in the wilderness for forty years. If fairness and equity are weighted here, then where was the favour toward Jacob in God’s covenantal promise?


\(^{135}\) Cf. Martin Luther, *Commentary on Genesis*, vol.2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1958), 365.
Two thousand years later, two kings met for the first time in history, one of them sitting at the pinnacle of political power. He had all wealth and prosperity within his grasp. His name was Herod Antipas (Antipas II),\textsuperscript{136} the son of Herod the Great,\textsuperscript{137} who in turn was the son of Antipater (also called Antipas), an Idumaean, an Edomite, an heir of Esau.\textsuperscript{138} In fact, the Jewish High Priest John Hyrcanus converted Antipas, Herod’s Idumaean grandfather, to Judaism.\textsuperscript{139} Thus Herod counted as a Jew legally. The other king was Jesus. According to the flesh, He was the descendant of Jacob. Nevertheless, in that early morning hour, as Jesus stood before Herod Antipas, He was no king at all but a criminal, rejected by His own people. Within a few hours, He would be crucified on the cross. As Jesus (the Seed of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob) stood before Herod Antipas (a seed of Esau and a converted Jew), the whole drama of Jacob and Esau’s struggle was reenacted in the history of salvation. The Son of Jacob once again faced the hatred and ridicule of the sons of Esau: King Herod attempted the annihilation of the infant Jesus together with the babies of Bethlehem, while Herod Antipas stared down at Jesus, the Son of Man, from his royal throne with disdain and mockery. Yet again, where was the favour toward Jacob in God’s covenantal promise?


\textsuperscript{137} Further details on how Herod the Great became king of Judea: “Herod (ca. 74-4 B.C.E.) was an Idumean noble who usurped the throne of Judea from the Hasmonaeans and reigned as King of Judea from 37 until 4 B.C.E. He skillfully negotiated the complex world of Greco-Roman Judea and brought his kingdom to its greatest economic success and political importance. Herod was the second son of Antipater the Idumean and Cypros, a Nabatean princess. He had three brothers, Phasael, Joseph, and Pheroras, and a sister named Salome. He grew up as a member of a powerful family of nobles in the court of the Hasmonean John Hyrcanus II. Herod's grandfather, Antipas, had served as strategos of Idumea under Alexander Jannaeus (Josephus, \textit{Ant.} 14.10).” [14.10 is the location in the Greek version. The English version is 14.1.3.] Cf. Collins and Harlow, \textit{The Eerdmans Dictionary of Early Judaism}, 729). See also Richardson, \textit{Herod}, 53-54.


What fairness (Rom. 9:14) was evident in the trial and the mocking of the son of Jacob by the son of Esau? Though Jesus Himself said that He could have called twelve legions of angels to destroy His enemies and set Him free, He chose the way of the cross and died alone for the world of humanity. Through the way of the cross, Christ—the elect Man—forever establishes the analogical principle of God’s election of grace.

The fact of God’s election through the way of the cross also delineates the theme of the reconciliation between the chosen and the non-chosen as illustrated by the account of Jacob and Esau. One of the central roles of the cross is to break down the dividing wall between the Jewish people and the Gentiles (Eph. 2:11-18, cf. Acts 22:21-22). The story of Jacob and Esau articulates a profound insight into the theme of reconciliation in the face of estrangement, and it must be considered in our reading of an election that extends to both Israel and Gentile nations alike.

At Mahanaim, as the two brothers embraced each other in reconciliation, Genesis 33:11 tells us that Jacob offered Esau gifts as a “blessing” to secure his brother’s favor and as an “offering to make restitution for the cause of estrangement . . . Without ever giving up the birthright he assumed by deception, Jacob forgoes the hegemony it entails. Without reinstatement as the firstborn, Esau forgoes the vengeance that nearly destroyed the family.”140 Instead, Esau offers to escort Jacob on their journey home. However, Jacob declines courteously with the excuse of not wanting to trouble Esau’s kindness with the burdens of both his young children and great flocks. Even when Esau offers to leave some of his men to protect them on their journey, Jacob again declines graciously. Kaminsky suggests that, “it is relatively clear that Jacob remains quite suspicious of Esau’s intentions

toward him and there is some possibility that Esau might harbor ill will toward Jacob.”

However, the subtle hint within this conversation reveals not so much Jacob’s distrust and suspicion of Esau’s intention, but more Jacob’s embarrassed conscience in not being able to face the full reconciliatory kindness of Esau. Regardless, we see in this account four insights regarding reconciliation bounded within the concept of election:

a) The non-chosen brother Esau demonstrated magnanimity. He responded with more grace and let go of past grievances, as compared to the chosen brother Jacob who retained his apprehension under the shadow of a conscience stricken with its own deception.

b) Reconciliation happens while they are in a foreign land (Mahanaim) and in the territory perhaps of another religion. Such is the reference to the “mysterious grace of God, march[ing] out triumphantly” in the land of the non-elect to arouse the conscience and to demolish the prejudice of the elect.

c) Coats suggests that reconciliation does not mean that all past differences are resolved or that the characters involved overcome all of their flaws. Kaminsky concurs with Coats’ observation: “Thus, reconciliation neither signals a return to the status quo ante, nor does it magically erase the character flaws that people have exhibited all along. Rather, when reconciliation occurs in the Bible, usually the characters have matured, but they remain partially flawed.”

Likewise, when God reconciled us in Jesus Christ, He forgave us while

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141 Kaminsky, *Yet I Loved Jacob*, 55.
142 Jacob tries to lavish Esau with gifts of wealth and words of homage (cf. 33:7, 10, 13-15) in order to pacify his brother’s possibly lingering anger.
146 Kaminsky, *Yet I Loved Jacob*, 56. Contrary to Coats, Kaminsky believes that the fact that Jacob and Esau do not end up living together should not in itself be read as a sign that the narrator believes no reconciliation
realizing that we still have our flaws and are in need of maturity. Such is the election of the

cross and the calling of the believers to the end of sanctification. Such is the message and the

ministry of reconciliation entrusted to the elect, which is by “not counting people’s sins

against them,” but rather imploring them on Christ’s behalf to be reconciled with God (2 Cor.

5:18-21).

d) Although the reconciliation might not be complete, and the characters involved in

the strife might not be restored to a perfect state of harmony, God is still working in ways

that may not be perceived directly. In the course of 

Heilsgeschichte (salvation history), the

election of grace looms large in the suffering of the cross, where true and complete

reconciliation can be realized between the chosen and the non-chosen, the elect and the

reprobate. There God reconciles both Jews and Gentiles in one body, even the Edomites

(Amos 9:11; Acts 15:15-17) unto Himself through the cross of Jesus Christ (Eph. 2:16).

The historical context and theological extension\textsuperscript{147} of these pairings—Isaac and

Ishmael (Sarah and Hagar), Jacob and Esau (Jesus and Herod)—are significant for shedding

light on our reading of Paul’s intention in Romans 9-11. The theological extension of the

pairing of Jacob and Esau with the historical encounter of Jesus and Herod aptly fits Paul’s

intention. The pairing is relevant to the immediate context of the central figure of Christ, the

corporate/covenant premise, and the theme of mercy in the text of Romans 9-11. Along with

this methodological precept, we may plausibly consider Paul’s allegorical approach in

\textsuperscript{147} By “theological extension” I mean the drawing out of implications from one historical/theological fact and their application to another central one, such as the allegorical pairing of Sarah and Hagar in Galatians 4.
Galatians 4, where Paul uses the Sarah and Hagar pairing as a correlative to the Isaac and Ishmael pairing in Romans 9.148

Essentially, in presenting his case on the election of Israel and arriving at his conclusion, Paul frequently appeals to Old Testament Scriptures in which Christ functions directly or indirectly as the key to his interpretation (Rom. 3:21-22; 9:5; 10:4, 21149; 2 Cor. 1:20). In fact, when Paul enumerates the Jewish privileges in Romans 9:4-5, the list culminates with Christ “the Messiah,” the ultimate privilege that God has given to His people. Christ is also the first thing in his elaborate salutation in Romans 1:2-7.150

Furthermore, Jesus claims that the Old Testament Scriptures are fulfilled in His own self (Lk. 24:27; Jn. 5:46). Notably also, Paul in Romans 9:7 chooses the word “seed” to refer to Abraham’s descendants. The pregnant sense of this word with reference to Genesis 21:12, 22:18 and Galatians 3:16 gives the readers to understand that ultimately God’s election points to Christ as the dividing line between the truly elect of God and those who think they are the “privileged elect” in Abraham (Gal. 3:29). Further along, the pairing of Jacob and Esau historically and contextually prefigures two nations or two kingdoms. Doubtless, what is foreshadowed is the kingdom of Christ and kingdom of Herod. This pairing of kingdoms also indicates that the historic election of Israel may find itself no longer in the role of Isaac and Jacob, but in the role of Jesus Christ, that is, in the role of the true Elect of God who presents Himself to be “hated” and “rejected” on the cross. He became the Forsaken, the

148 The historical and theological extension parallels Kierkegaard’s “metaphorical precepts” and Stendahl’s “push and purpose” reading of Scriptures (cf. Kierkegaard, Works of Love, 209 and Stendahl, Romans, 36).
149 An allusion to the outstretched hands of Christ on the cross.
Reprobate, so that the “vessels of wrath” might perchance be transformed into “vessels of mercy.”

Paul’s discussion of the purpose of the cross in the larger historical and exegetical study of Romans 9 integrates well with the trajectory of God’s redemptive plan explicated in the earlier chapters of the epistle. Sin and unbelief, which had persisted in the life of Israel, had hindered them from sensing the purpose of their election. In God’s wisdom and eternal purpose, He dealt with sin and unbelief through the incarnation, the death and resurrection of Christ. Behind the ultimate grace in Romans 9:5 is imbedded the historical fact of the cross of Christ in 1:3-4. That is why Wright thinks that the cross is at the heart of Romans 9:6-10:21, and is the theological reason for the echoes of Romans 5:10 in 11:15. The echoes are those of the ultimate truth of the cross and the final reconciliation of Israel with the Gentiles (Rom. 11:15, 28-32; 15:27). These twin movements in Paul’s focus come together in Romans 11:28-32. On the one hand, the rhetorical force of the entire passage is to make the point that election is of God’s grace and mercy through the cross of Christ, not of works or personal righteousness and zealousness. On the other hand, Paul has set out his scriptural stories in such a way as to convey that, on the basis of the death and resurrection of Christ, God’s covenant with Abraham means reconciliation and has presently been fulfilled among the Gentiles (Acts 3:25-26, cf. Rom. 9:24).

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151 Ibid. Wright explains: “Christ’s ‘casting away,’ like Israel’s, means reconciliation; his new life, like that of Israel, means new life for others; and of 5:15-19 in 11:12, Israel acts out Adam’s παράπτωμα (“trespass”), just as in 7:7-12; it must then follow the Messiah through the Adamic death-in-the-flesh to new life” (ibid.)

152 The allusions to His crucifixion, direct or indirect, are also made in 9:33 (cf. Ps. 118:22 and Matt. 21:42 in the context Christ’s death), 10:9 and 10:21.
Summary

The unity behind the differentiated categories laid out in Romans 9 is not only demonstrated through the text’s literary chiastic structures and thematic key words, which show a thoughtful line of reasoning; it is also suggested through a consideration of the economic Trinity. Paul acknowledges this economic Trinity *ad extra* in the witness of the Holy Spirit, who elects creation by His work of regeneration and who bears witness to the elect of their assurance, exclusively in faith and through the Word declared. In this we can see the work of the Holy Spirit in connection with the eternal goal and purpose of God in His election of grace. The apostle further underscores the wideness of God’s mercy to the electing community, which he establishes by pointing to a) the mystery of God’s merciful plan for the hardened Israel, b) God’s great endurance with respect to the vessels of wrath, in that He does not desire their doom but desires to extend mercy for their salvation; and c) the extension of God’s mercy for the non-elect and His purpose to make them into “vessels of mercy” as well (9:23, 24).

The surprising insight in this Trinitarian election is that the way of the cross of Christ is imbedded in the Esau and Jacob connection through their descendants. This is in line with Paul’s argumentation that Jesus Christ is the central figure of the purpose of God’s election throughout the *Heilsgeschichte*, the history of salvation. The whole story of the Patriarchs pinpoints the crossroads where Christ bore the destiny of both Israel and the rest of humanity and carried them to the cross by Himself.
CHAPTER 4

TRINITARIAN ELECTION IN THE THEOLOGY OF THE CROSS (I)

In studying the unity of Romans 9, in spite of its diverse aspects, we have seen how a Trinitarian economic perspective can enrich and deepen the doctrine of election. The prevailing witness of the Holy Spirit, the surpassing mercy of God the Father, and the transforming cross of Christ the Son as the culmination of the former two: all three work together in harmony to accomplish the predestinating divine plan of salvation beyond human wisdom and knowledge (Rom. 11:33-34). Moreover, the richness of election as discussed in Romans 9 calls for a critical examination through the theology of the cross. This will allow our exegesis of the text to advance beyond the doctrine of double predestination, while ushering us into a broader and richer understanding of the high purpose of the election of grace.

The next three chapters will adopt a spiral approach.\(^1\) We will concentrate on a discussion of how each person of the Godhead plays its essential role in Trinitarian election (within the Pauline epistles and beyond) from the perspective of the theology of the cross. Chapter 4 will wrestle with the *Trinitarian perichoretic relations in the suffering of the cross*. Chapter 5 will study the *elective pursuit of the divine eleos in the theology of the cross*, while Chapter 6 will discern *the purpose of election in the way of the cross* in alignment with Romans 9. In this chapter, I will further expand on election within the Trinitarian reciprocal relationships, from the eternal conception of predestination to the Trinitarian election revealed in the reconciliatory works on the cross. As the Trinitarian suffering converges on the cross, the concrete intensity of the sacrificial love in the event of Trinitarian election is

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\(^1\) A spiral approach is a method for discussing a variety of related theological subjects in a progressively upward fashion. The necessity of circling back to former topics is dictated by the broadening theological emphasis at each progressive level of the discussion.
fully demonstrated. I will then show how a total Trinitarian self-sacrificial act of giving, which concretizes and intensifies God’s work of reconciling humanity to Himself, becomes the definitive pursuit of election.

Unequivocally, the cross and the economic Trinity are interconnected, as we have seen in the typological discussion of the last chapter. Moltmann fittingly asserts, “The cross is at the center of the Trinity . . . No Trinity is conceivable without the Lamb, without the sacrifice of love, without the crucified Son.” Adrienne Von Speyr considers “the Cross as Trinitarian event, the participation of Father and Spirit in the forsakenness of the Son.” In light of the twofold themes of Trinitarian election and the theology of the cross, which are entrenched within the study of Romans 9, the next three chapters, as mentioned, will further examine the Trinitarian relations in the suffering of the cross, the pursing eleos in the communication of the cross, and the purpose of election through the way of the cross.

THE TRINITARIAN PERICHORETIC ELECTION IN THE SUFFERING OF THE CROSS

All three persons of the Triune God are involved in the perpetual revelation of the will and work of election from its eternal conception. In fact, Christology and soteriology are rooted in the mystery of the Trinity; and they make it apparent that Christ is not elected alone, but in accord with the electing commitment of the Father and the Holy Spirit. In harmony with the Triune God, both immanently and economically, Christ’s election and predestination must be regarded as a manifestation, intervention and communication of the common work of the Triune God, of whom the Father is the beginning. Barth points out that

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2 Moltmann, *Trinity*, 83.
4 *CD* II/2:105.
5 *CD* II/2:105-06.
the Reformed doctrine speaks of the will of God such that, “The will in the Father to elect individuals precedes his election of the Son.” However, Barth agrees with Polanus in his reference to Eph. 1:4 where, Polanus states that “The Father has chosen us not as Father, because election is not the personal work of the person of the Father, but as God, since election is the common work of the whole most Holy Trinity, of whom the Father is the beginning.” However, it is only through the cross of Christ that the entire Trinitarian Godhead is wholly revealed as such, from the electing plan of the Father, through His Son’s atonement on the cross, to the Holy Spirit’s illuminating power. In other words, the cross of Christ is that which reflects the Trinity’s reality in history, and hence is itself the full revelation of the economic aspect of the Trinity.

The Heilsgeschichte of Christ is perfected in and through the cross. His accomplishment on the cross is what Barth calls “a negative achievement,” where Christ stands among the sinners as a sinner, being condemned in the place of the reprobates, rejected by God the Father in the agony expressed by His own words, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” It is precisely through this “negation” on the cross that Paul alludes to the involvement of the Holy Spirit among the elect earlier in Galatians 3:13 and 14: “Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree”), that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.”

Remarkably, the patriarchal blessing and promises given in God’s covenant with Abraham,

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6 CD II/2:112.
7 Amandus Polanus was a German theologian of early Reformed orthodoxy.
8 CD II/2:111.
10 In this sense, Moltmann shows that the cross of Christ has defined the eternal Trinity’s hypostases since the beginning of time.
11 Barth, Romans, 97.
12 Ibid.
also discussed in Romans 9, are fulfilled on the cross through the promise of the Spirit. It is precisely on the cross of Christ that one beholds the faithfulness of the Trinitarian God in the election of grace throughout the ages.

**Election within the Trinitarian Perichoresis**

The traditional Reformed doctrine of predestination has for the most part overlooked the work of the Holy Spirit in its interpretation. First, the emphasis on God’s absolute decree has made the electing God of Calvin a *Deus nudus absconditus* (purely hidden God)—not the *Deus revelatus* (revealed God), such as the Triune God of the cross. Second, its “anthropocentric” interpretation of individual destiny does not keep the Trinitarian background and essence of the cross in close scrutiny. Balthasar maintains that only by rooting Christology and soteriology in the mystery of the Trinity “does the believer match up to the great interpretations of the Cross in Paul and John: the Son’s Cross is the revelation of the Father’s love (Romans 8, 32; John 3, 16); and the bloody outpouring of that love comes to its inner fulfillment in the shedding abroad of their common Spirit into the

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13 The eternal περιχώρησις or *circumincessio* of the Trinitarian persons is the profound doctrine presented early on by John Damascene in describing the circulatory character of the eternal divine life (Moltmann, *Trinity*, 174). In *perichoresis*, the Trinitarian persons are not to be understood as three different individuals, who only subsequently enter into relationship with one another as tritheism might suggest. Moltmann argues that, “In the perichoresis, the very thing that divides them becomes that which binds them together. The ‘circulation’ of the eternal divine life becomes perfect through the fellowship and unity of the three different Persons in the eternal love . . . The Trinitarian Persons do not merely exist and live in one another; they also bring one another mutually to manifestation in the divine glory” (ibid., 175-76). This mutual manifestation in the divine glory as described by Moltmann can also be understood *commissionally* in their mutual exaltation in the divine glory. Torrance explains *perichoresis* as “the way in which the three divine Persons mutually dwell in one another and coinhere or inexist in one another while nevertheless remaining other than one another and distinct from one another.” See Thomas F. Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God: One Being, Three persons* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996), 102.


16 The debate is not about corporate versus individual election, for individual destiny is not logically ruled out by focusing on Christ’s work of mercy on the cross. The whole argument is rather on the “crucicentric” versus “anthropocentric” reading of election.
hearts of men (Romans 5, 5).” 

Similarly, Jüngel principally locates the Holy Spirit as the bond of unity in the mystery of the Trinitarian election: “The third ‘person’ of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit, is regarded as the bond of unity between these apparently irreconcilable aspects of God—the God who gives life and the God who dies; the God who loves, and the God who is loved.”

Specifically, we must now ask how Trinitarian election operates immanently and economically. We can then move to the insights and implications drawn from such considerations and ask how they contribute to the doctrine of election. Finally, we will be in a position to trace the ways that Trinitarian election helps us to appreciate the election of the cross and its works in the passion of Jesus Christ.

The first consideration is that the election of Jesus Christ is the eternal choice and decision of the Triune Godhead. There can be no Godhead in itself: “Godhead is always the Godhead of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. But the Father is the Father of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of the Father and the Spirit of Jesus Christ.” The reality of the eternal being of the Triune God demands that the self-giving of the Son of God

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19 Cf. Lk. 23:35 where the text itself affirms that Jesus is definitely the Elect of God, in spite of the bystanders ridiculing Him as to whether He is the elect (ἐκλεκτός) of God. Paul in Col. 1:27 alludes to the determination (θέλω also implies choice) of God that in Christ the salvation of the Gentiles can be made known. Though Paul does not state directly that Christ is “eternally elected” in Romans 9, nevertheless, Christ is the focus of his discussion of the salvation of both Jews and Gentiles in Romans 9-11 (as aforementioned in “Christ as the Central Figure” in Chapter 3) and of mercy (Christ is always alluded to, as when God’s mercy meets His wrath on the cross, Rom. 3:25, cf. Isa. 54:8; Rom. 9:25-26, cf. Hos. 1:6-10; 2:23; Eph. 2:4). Because Christ is the central theme in this corpus, I believe Paul’s intention in Romans 9 is to say that Christ and His cross are the heart of God’s election. William of St. Thierry describes predestination first as Christ being predestined to be our light of grace (*Romans*, 1:4, 21); “God predestined Christ before the ages” (*Romans*, 3:24-25, 70).
20 *CD* II/2:115.
be a common *perichoresis* of the will and election of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.\(^{21}\) Only when election is understood as a Trinitarian choice and not as a Unitarian or Binitarian choice is the love of God made complete in both the immanent communion of the self-relatedness of God’s being and in its economic realization in the temporal gospel event. Colwell affirms that while election is a dynamic event in the Triune God before all time, it is actualized in the election of Jesus Christ and ontically realized in the power of the Holy Spirit.\(^{22}\)

This act of self-determination in the eternal *koinonia* of the Triune God must also be understood as a free and sovereign decision of grace. The Triune God elected Christ in freedom; therefore, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit could well have existed without us but freely chose not to exist without us.\(^{23}\) The freedom of the Triune God is also a sovereign act; therefore, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit do not make any decision regarding the election of grace arbitrarily.\(^{24}\)

The second consideration is that *election is an expression of the Triune God’s love for His creation*. Barth ascertains that God certainly does not will Himself without us. In all the fullness of His Godhead, in which He might well have been satisfied with Himself, He wills Himself together with us. He wills Himself in fellowship with us—\(^{25}\)—the divine with the human, the infinite with the finite, the Holy One with the sinner. There is a great gulf in

\(^{21}\) *CD* II/2:175. Barth insists that election is the movement of Father, Son, and Spirit, such that the Trinity is *logically necessary* to God’s self-determination (Kevin W. Hector, “God’s Triunity and Self-determination,” in *Trinity and Election in Contemporary Theology*, 43).


\(^{23}\) George Hunsinger, “Election and Trinity,” in *Trinity and Election in Contemporary Theology*, 110. “God’s freedom is freedom for humanity—not trinity and election freedom from it . . . there is no conceptual cleavage between God’s freedom and eternal self-determination” (Hector, “God’s Triunity and Self-determination,” in *Trinity and Election*, 41).


\(^{25}\) *CD* IV/2:777.
those dualities that makes that fellowship humanly impossible. However, in God’s
determination to fellowship with us, He elected His Son to mediate (1 Tim. 2:5) that great
gulf through the cross (Heb. 9:15). In His self-giving, the Elect took the place of the
reprobate on the cross and thus demonstrated the affection and mercy of God that Paul
speaks about in Romans 5:8 and 9:23-26. Biblically, the election of fellowship with
humanity is an election of fellowship with the Triune God—I John 1:3 speaks of the fact that
fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. I Corinthians 1:9 explains the
faithfulness of God in calling the elect into fellowship with His Son. Philippians 2:1 states
the believer’s fellowship with the Spirit. This fellowship is a shared life with the Triune God
(1 Jn. 3:1a). In willing Himself to share fellowship with us, “He wills Himself as our Lord
and therefore as our highest good, or rather as the one and perfect good of our existence, our
being under His lordship.” In willing Himself to share fellowship with us, He loves
humanity with His self-giving love.

Third, Trinitarian election, which operates economically, is explicated in the
reconciling works of the cross. Barth calls attention to the fact that the doctrine of election,
which stands by the doctrine of the Trinity, is always biblically an election to
reconciliation—that is, to justification, sanctification, and vocation. Therefore, everything
in the doctrine of reconciliation through the cross is but an explication of the doctrine of

26 ἡδέτε ποταπῆν ἀγάπην δέδωκεν ἡμῖν ὁ πατήρ.
27 CD IV/2:777.
29 The call of Abraham was to bless the nations by reconciling humanity to God through the forgiveness of sin
(Gen. 12:3, cf. Acts 25-26; Rom. 11:15); Jesus, the Elect of God (Isa. 42:1), is the light for His people and the
nations in order to draw and reconcile them to God (Isa. 42:6), and He has called Israel to model themselves
after Him as the servant of the Lord to be light to the nations (49:6; 60:3; Rom. 2:19); we are called to be
ambassadors of reconciliation in the cross and election (2 Cor. 5:14, 17-19); reconciliation between the Jews
and the Gentiles occurs in the election context (Eph. 2:14-16; cf. Rom. 9:24; 10:12); the election of Christ and
His cross reconciles all things and God’s enemies to Himself (Rom. 5:10; Col. 1:20-22).
30 The other lesser-known Reformers (Olevian and Vermigli) expound this view more explicitly than Luther and
Calvin.
Divine predestination is a living act of God shaping the history of His redemption in His freedom; it is an inward vitality of God’s Triune being and activity in se overflowing as His being and activity ad extra.

The study of the elective works of the Triune God, operating economically through the reconciling work of the cross, helps us to measure the perichoretic participation of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit in the pursuit of the divine eleos in all its abundance. Romans itself provides foundational illumination in this regard, and thus offers its own rich Trinitarian context for understanding the particular texts of its discussion of election in chapters 9-11. In electing Himself together pro nobis through the cross, the Triune God loved His creation to the uttermost. In instituting the new covenant of the cross with the elect, the Triune God elected the cross as His divine eschatological judgment on the rejected Man. To make it possible for the elect to serve the living God (Heb. 9:14), the definitive act of the Trinity on the cross cleanses the conscience of humanity from deeds that lead to death. Furthermore, in placing the believers into a new elect community—the Church—the Triune God elects men and women to eternal life through the cross. In the proclamation of God’s Kingdom through the electing works of the Crucified and the Resurrected One, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit

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32 “The fact that God is means that from all eternity God is active in His inner relationships as Father, Son and Holy Ghost, that He wills Himself and knows of Himself, that He loves, that He makes use of His sovereign freedom, that He maintains and exercises this freedom, and in so doing maintains and demonstrates Himself” (*CD* II/2:175).
33 ἐκχύαο (Rom. 5:5).
34 *CD* II/2:175, 180.
35 Refer to the Excursus after this chapter for the outline of a tripartite presentation of the electing works of the Triune God through the cross. The outline also gives a detailed biblical analysis and comprehensive theological perspective on the operation of the economic Trinity.
36 Rom. 5:5; 8:14-16; Jn. 1:29; 3:16; 13:1; 14:16-17, 26; 16:8; Acts 2:33; Eph. 1:4, 13-14; Phil 2:8; 1 Jn. 2:2.
37 Rom. 11:27; Ex. 19:5, 6; Jer. 31:33; Matt. 26:28; 1 Cor. 11:25; 2 Cor. 3:6; Heb. 7:22; 8:8-10.
39 Rom. 3:23-26; 12:2; 15:16; Jn. 17:17; 1 Cor. 6:11; Gal. 5:18; Heb. 9:11, 12, 14, 15.
40 Rom. 1:4; 5:18; 6:23; 8:2, 11, 29-30; 11:5, 29, 36; Isa. 9:6; Jn. 6:54; 10:28; 17:2, 3; 1 Cor. 12:13; 15:45; Eph. 2:15-17, 22; 3:2-12; 4:2-4, 7-13; 1 Jn. 5:11.
proclaim freedom to the suffering world\textsuperscript{41} and initiate the work of sanctification.\textsuperscript{42} The divine election can also be described and understood \textit{commissionally} in the Trinitarian perichoretic manifestation in Christ’s passion, ascension and exaltation.\textsuperscript{43} On the contrary, the rejection by men and women of God’s exceeding provision through Christ’s finished work and the Spirit’s comprehensive ministry in the Trinitarian election of the cross makes eternal condemnation a certain consequence.\textsuperscript{44}

The fourth consideration is that \textit{the security of one’s election is truly assured by the Trinitarian operation in election}. Barth asks the question: How can one be assured of his salvation when election is by an absolute decree?\textsuperscript{45} Indeed, how accessible and comprehensible will the assurance of an absolute decree be compared to the assurance brought about by Trinitarian election? Perhaps another applicable question is: Would there be a variance of outcomes between an absolute decree and a Trinitarian election based on an aim and direction for the life of the elect within the elected community? What would these outcomes look like? For Barth, Calvin’s eternal decree is only good news to the elect, not to the whole of humanity. The departure point for Barth in the Trinitarian election is God’s freedom to love and His election of grace in Jesus Christ,\textsuperscript{46} while Calvin’s doctrine of election anchors itself in God’s immutable decree and secret plan in human election and reprobation.\textsuperscript{47}

\begin{footnotes}
\item 41 Rom. 8:2; Mk. 1:8; Lk. 4:18-19; Acts 2:1-11; 2 Cor. 5:19, Gal. 3:14; Eph. 2:16.
\item 42 Rom. 6:6, 19; 8: 29; 12:1-2; 15:16; Eph. 4:30; 1 Thess. 5:23; Heb. 13:12;
\item 43 Moltmann, \textit{Trinity}, 94, 127.
\item 44 Rom. 1:18, 29; 2:8; 3:5; Matt. 12:31, 32; Heb. 10:26, 29.
\item 45 \textit{CD} II/2:338-39.
\item 46 John 3:16, 17; Rom. 5:8. Noticeably, the medieval theologians, William St. Thierry, Thomas Aquinas, and Nicholas of Lyra, also expressed their biblical understanding and theological solution to the problem of election and reprobation in terms of the love and goodness of God (cf. Chapter 1).
\end{footnotes}
The security of one’s election as assured by the Trinitarian operation in election is highlighted by the following evidence:

a) God’s freedom and love have little to do with abstract absoluteness or despotic sovereignty. Jesus Christ, as the real basis of God’s freedom to love and elect, secures God’s redemptive act for the elect, because Christ Himself is both the Subject and the Object of election.

b) The knowledge of the absolute decree belongs to the religious aspect of a person, while the eternal election of Jesus Christ kindles the faith of a person by the Holy Spirit and summons him or her to faith, both cognitively in spirit and creatively in character. The election of Jesus Christ necessarily demands and evokes faith, as it likewise demonstrates a confidence in God, which is itself obedience to God. On the contrary, an absolute decree is distant, secluded and impersonal. Furthermore, no assurance or confidence can be placed at all in the eternal decree, and obedience to it becomes quite inconceivable.

c) As aforementioned, the crucified God is not identical to and not interchangeable with the absolute decree God. A lifeless rule of the absolute decree does not summon one to adopt a community-oriented spirit in his aims as an elected person. The predisposition of Calvin’s predestination is individualism, not collectivism. However, Barth stresses that the election of the community is the consummation in the election of the individual. Therefore, as all who are elected now live in Jesus Christ, no longer will these individuals live for themselves alone; they are connected immediately to His abiding community. Such a

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48 In the following excursus, we will see how the Trinitarian God operates. The elaboration of tripartite cooperative endeavors, in the electing work of the Triune God through the event of the cross, clearly demonstrates the love of God that went beyond all measure to secure the election of humanity in reconciling them to Himself. Thus, the ignoring and scorning of such love is what makes sin utterly sinful (cf. Rom. 7:13).
49 CD II/2:341.
50 Ibid., 160-61.
51 Ibid., 314. The election of the individual is never as a private person, but always in an abiding community and in fellowship with God. Cf. Rom. 12:5.
reorientation from a focus on individual destiny to the election of the church as a form of community is the precise direction needed to guard against the narcissistic culture that has often infiltrated the church. This essential truth or theological reorientation reveals the scope of what God wills for man when, in His eternal election of grace, He elected him for fellowship with Himself through the fostering of the church community.52

d) The Holy Spirit Himself bears witness to the elect, not in their own self-examination or self-evaluation, but exclusively in faith, that they are the children of God (Rom. 8:16).53 The Spirit who testifies to Christ (Jn. 15:26) is the Spirit who enables sinners to see and hear and accept and recognize Jesus Christ as the Son of Man.54 The Spirit summons fallen humanity from death to true knowledge of God in Jesus Christ and drives each to look to Jesus Christ and listen to Him as the Savior of mankind55 (Jn. 14:26).

**Trinitarian Election and the Cross**

I have argued in the last chapter that the epistle of Romans provides us with a context of Trinitarian economy in understanding the event of the cross. Not only is it the highlight of God’s purpose in election, but it also lies at the heart of Romans 9:6-10:21. In his book *The Crucified God*, Moltmann suggests that in order to understand the intra-Trinitarian relationship and the immanent “transaction” of suffering on the cross between the Father and the Son, it is necessary to speak in Trinitarian terms:

The Son suffers dying; the Father suffers the death of the Son. The grief of the Father here is just as important as the death of the Son. The Fatherlessness of the Son is matched by the Sonlessness of the Father, and if God has

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52 CD II/2:265.
53 Ibid., 340.
54 CD IV/2:323.
55 CD IV/1:753.
constituted himself as the Father of Jesus Christ, then he also suffers the death of his Fatherhood in the death of the Son.\textsuperscript{56}

Citing Mühlen, Moltmann elucidates further that on the cross, the “Father and Son are most deeply separated in forsakenness and at the same time are most inwardly one in their surrender. What proceeds from this event between Father and Son is the Spirit which justifies the godless, fills the forsaken with love and even brings the dead alive.”\textsuperscript{57}

It is accurate to say that from the event of the cross, the Spirit justifies the godless, fills them with love and makes them alive in Christ. However, this Trinitarian discussion by Moltmann, though superbly penned, still finds the role of the Holy Spirit lacking in direct participation with the passion of Christ on the cross. God’s Trinitarian election is solidly “distinguished, reaffirmed—perhaps even intensified”\textsuperscript{58}—given the Spirit’s participation in the suffering death of the Son on the cross. As the Son suffers dying, not only does the Father suffer the death of the Son from \textit{above}, but the Spirit also suffers the death of the Son from \textit{below} (Lk. 23:46 specifically mentions the Spirit within, which was testified of by John the Baptist in Jn. 1:32-33). He does so by abiding with His empowering strength through the whole ordeal, as prefigured in the temptations of Christ in the wilderness (Matt. 4:1; Lk. 4:1). Not only does the Father suffer pain in the death of His Fatherhood and in the death of His Son, but the Spirit—the bond of love between the Father and the Son—also suffers pain in the physical torture of the Son. Even more so, the Spirit suffers pain in the agony of Father-forsakenness in the Son, as the Son elects Himself to reprobation on behalf of the sin of the

\textsuperscript{57} Ibid., 244.
\textsuperscript{58} Borrowing the language of Paul Dafydd Jones, “Obedience, Trinity, and Election,” in \textit{Trinity and Election}, 153-54.
whole world. Thus, the Spirit equally experiences the Fatherlessness of the Son and the Sonlessness of the Father.

If the cross of Jesus is understood as a divine event, it is necessary to speak in Trinitarian terms of the Son and the Father and the Spirit.59 The Trinitarian suffering is necessary to complete the concrete intensity of the sacrificial love and election of grace in the event of the cross. In so doing, the death of Christ on the cross is no longer seen as just one person of the Trinity carrying all the weight of the sacrifice, but a total Trinitarian self-sacrificial giving that concretizes and intensifies God’s work of reconciling humanity to Himself. Such a perspective distinguishes God’s Trinitarian election from the traditional Reformed doctrine of election.

Thus, the cross for mankind—the godless and the godforsaken—in a Trinitarian election is the gospel in its fullest measure. The gospel in the election of Jesus Christ finds its summation and consummation at the cross in Golgotha. The election of Jesus Christ means the election of the cross, where the love between the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit intertwines before and after the harshness of the forsakenness and the descent into the black abyss of death. The election of Jesus Christ means the election of the cross where God the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit elect the Son to take upon Himself “the eternal death of the godless and the godforsaken, so that all the godless and the godforsaken can experience communion with him.”60 Therefore, in the election of the cross, “God does not become a religion, so that man participates in him by corresponding religious thoughts and feelings. God does not become a law, so that man participates in him through obedience to a law. God does not become an ideal, so that man achieves community with him through

60 Ibid., 276.
constant striving.61 Rather, God does become the *Immanuel*, so that human beings may draw near with awe and experience a miracle of love that accepts them in its sweet embrace. The God of Immanuel and the God Incarnate62 saw the godless and the godforsaken, condemned to death; He took their place and made them what they are at that moment before the cross, loved and forgiven, reprobate sinners saved by grace. Without the Trinitarian perichoretic “us-ness” in the sovereignty of God, soteriological concepts like propitiation would be meaningless. Only God can sovereignly die for the sins of the whole world — God the Son. Only God can sovereignly take away the penalty of sins through justification — God the Father. Only God can sovereignly quicken God the Son from the death — God the Spirit. Hence, Moltmann maintains that we cannot have “Trinity in heaven without the cross and the One crucified”;63 and may I also add, “without the empty tomb and the One resurrected!”

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61 Ibid.

62 A question arises concerning the incarnational relationship with human beings. Does it constitute a change in God’s being? While McCormack guards carefully against such a suggestion, Molnar sees no reason for alarm because it transpires within God’s freedom (Molnar, “The Trinity, Election, and God’s Ontological Freedom,” 50-53, 57-62. Cf. Aaron T. Smith, “God’s Self-Specification: His Being is His Electing,” in *Trinity and Election*, 215-17). Nevertheless, Hunsinger points out that in the Trinitarian election, where the Triune God chooses for Himself to be in a covenant relationship with the world in the election of Jesus Christ, God remains as the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in their perfection of pre-temporal, supra-temporal, and post-temporal eternity (Hunsinger, “Election and the Trinity,” in *Trinity and Election*, 98; and Dempsey, “Introduction,” in *Trinity and Election*, 10). Perhaps Levering’s position is worthy of consideration here: “When the Triune God draws the man into a covenant relationship with Himself, God establishes in the human being a new relationship to Himself in the persons of the Trinity. For such a change to be possible, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit need not become different from what and who they are; rather, the new relationship arises through a change in the human being. The change in the human being draws the human into the eternal divine life, rather than making requisite the historicizing of the divine life” (Matthew Levering, “Christ, the Trinity, and Predestination,” in *Trinity and Election*, 253). Although Hunsinger and Levering sidestep the incarnational aspect of the divine being by dwelling on the covenantal relationship, both their viewpoints emphasize God’s eternity rather than just the supra-temporal historicity of the incarnation. God’s eternity requires that God is perfect in His pre-temporal, supra-temporal, and post-temporal eternity, as expressed by Hunsinger. If the economic Trinity has always been elected to be God-with-us, and if this transpires within God’s freedom, then the incarnational relationship with human beings does not constitute a change in God’s eternal being. God is free to do new things without ceasing to be the eternal Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

63 Moltmann, *Trinity*, 159.
The cross in the Trinitarian election invites the reprobate sinners to go through the transformation that only the Spirit of God can bring about as they are drawn by faith into the presence of the eternal divine life. The change in the human being is the transformation of the heart as promised in Ezek. 11:19\(^64\) and 36:26\(^65\) through the Spirit of God—“And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws” (36:27, emphasis added). Interestingly, in the context of Ezek. 36:16-23, God is wrathful against the elect Israel for profaning His name among the nations. However, instead of God’s condemnation, an unexpected message of mercy is extended to the malefactors, calling for them to repent from their “evil ways and wicked deeds” (vv. 31 and 32) amidst God’s promise of grace—that is, His promise to give them a new heart and put a new spirit in them. This shows what the elect Israel ought to do and also what they cannot do; they ought to repent and they cannot create for themselves a new heart, which only God can do through the Holy Spirit (Ps. 51:10-12, cf. Zech. 7:12). The same truth is taught by Jesus in His conversation with an elect Israeliite, a Pharisee named Nicodemus, as recorded in John 3:5-8. Perhaps Nicodemus thought that the elect Israel needed only the appearance of the triumphant Messiah. To his astonishment, Jesus talks to him about the need for regeneration of heart in terms of “being born anew or from above” (\(\gamma\varepsilon\nu\nu\acute{a}w\ \divideontena\)) through the Holy Spirit,\(^66\) which echoes the familiar theme in Ezekiel 11:19 and 36:26, 27. Nonetheless, the fulfillment of this promise—the coming of the Holy Spirit and the visible sign of His

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\(^{64}\) “I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them; I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh.”

\(^{65}\) “A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh.”

\(^{66}\) This new birth is a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17) by the free grace of God. Barth calls this new creation (being declared righteous) \emph{creatio ex nihilo}, creation out of nothing (Barth, \textit{Romans}, 101-03).
presence, attested to by both the prophet Ezekiel and Jesus Christ—did not occur until Christ
had fulfilled the election of the cross (Jn. 7:39, cf. 12:23, 13:31).

In summary, Election and the Trinity need to be elaborated in light of one another.
God’s economic Trinity freely determines to be God-with-us and God-for-us, and this
determination is fulfilled in the Trinitarian election of the cross. As the Trinitarian suffering
converges on the cross, the event of the Trinitarian election is historically sealed as the
election of grace. In so doing, God demonstrates a total Trinitarian self-sacrificial giving that
concretizes and intensifies God’s work of reconciling humanity to Himself. This self-
sacrificial giving is the definitive pursuit of election.

**Excursus:**
The Operation of the Trinitarian Election Through the Cross

The following outline provides a tripartite presentation of the electing work of the
Triune God through the cross. It also articulates several theological perspectives and
provides detailed Scriptural references for the operation of the economic Trinity.

a) In electing Himself together *pro nobis* through the cross:

— The Father is eternally the one who would send the Son and Spirit for
  humanity. Barths elaborates: “The covenant God is not alone, but with Him
  there is also the covenant people, and therefore the covenant man. The centre of
  this event is indeed that God was not content merely to be God, but that *propter
  nos homines* (for us men).”

— The Son is eternally the one who would take humanity to Himself. Without
  ceasing to be God, Christ became human as the Son of Man for the conversion

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67 Jn. 20:21; Lk. 1:35, “the Son proceeds from the Father and the Spirit;” John 15:26, “the Spirit proceeds from
the Father and the Son.” See also Augustine, *The Trinity*, xv.
68 *CD IV/2:6.*
of all humanity to Himself. God condescends and humbles Himself to take on the form of a human creature and becomes man, so that humanity has the possibility of being exalted, “not as God or like God, but to God, being placed at His side, not in identity, but in true fellowship with Him, and becoming a new man in this exaltation and fellowship.”

69 Herewith we see the two movements of reconciliation in the event of the cross: a) a movement from above to below, of God coming down for humanity through incarnation, and b) a movement from below to above, “the movement of reconciled man to God.”

70— The Spirit is eternally the one who would unite humans with Christ. 71 Torrance adopts the key expression of prothesis to refer to divine election, in which the Father purposed the union of God and humanity in Christ before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:4). 72 Moreover, this prothesis also should encompass the sending of the Holy Spirit in the name of Jesus (Jn. 14:16-17, 26; Acts 2:33; Rom. 8:14-16; Eph. 1:13-14) to make known the Father’s purpose and unite the believer with Christ. In the Son, the “wondrous conjunction between God and man in Christ” is revealed through the incarnation. Following the footsteps of Barth, Torrance sees that the trajectory of election is consummated when this “most holy fraternity” between the Triune God and humanity is restored through the adoption (Rom. 8:15), a distinctive work of the Holy Spirit.

69 Ibid.
70 Ibid.
71 Hector, “God’s Triunity and Self-Determination,” in Trinity and Election, 44. Quoting Hilary, Augustine writes: “Eternity in the Father, the form in the Image, the use in the Gift” (Augustine, The Trinity, 6.10.11). In uniting humanity with Christ (the form, the incarnate and the Image), the Spirit is both the use (executor) and the Gift from the eternal Father.
b) In the election of grace, the Triune God loved\textsuperscript{74} His creation to the uttermost:

— The Father loved and gave the Son to the world (Jn. 3:16).

— The Son loved (Jn. 13:1) and died on the cross for the sin of the world (John 1:29; Phil. 2:8; I Jn. 2:2).

— The Spirit convicts the world of sin and pours the love of God into the hearts of men (Jn. 16:8; Rom. 5:5). Furthermore, the fruit of the Spirit is love (Rom. 15:30; Gal. 5:22).\textsuperscript{75}

c) In instituting the new covenant (ἡ καινὴ διαθήκη) of the cross with the elect:

— The Father found fault with His holy nation, His treasured possession, whom He had led out of Egypt, because they did not remain faithful to His covenant. Therefore He declared that He would make a new covenant with His people (Ex. 19:5, 6; Jer. 31:33; Rom. 11:27; Heb. 8: 8-9).

— Christ the Son instituted the new covenant through His shed blood on the cross (Matt. 26:28; Rom. 11:27; 1 Cor. 11:25; Heb. 7:22). The main purpose of the new covenant through His blood was to “turn godlessness away from Jacob” and “to take away their sins” (Rom. 11:26-27). The purpose of Christ’s election is to turn away ungodliness and to save his people from their sins (Matt. 1:21) by the purchase of pardoning mercy through the cross. This solemn intention concerning “Jacob” and the Gentiles was made the matter of a new covenant in which pardon for sin was the foundation (Heb. 8:12).\textsuperscript{76}

\textsuperscript{74} Love in the Trinity: “the lover, the beloved, and the love” (Augustine, \textit{The Trinity}, 8.8.12,10.14; 9.2.2).

\textsuperscript{75} “The Spirit of life, that is, the Holy Spirit, who is the life of souls, because he is love. Therefore, the law of this Spirit is called ‘the law of love’” (Abelard, \textit{Romans}, 265).

— The Holy Spirit writes the “laws” of the new covenant in the hearts of the elect (2 Cor. 3:6; Heb. 8:10). The Holy Ghost is a guide and witness to the new covenant (Heb. 10:15, 16, cf. Isa 59:21). This passage is cited from Jer. 31:31, 33, in which, through the new covenant, God promises that He will pour out His Spirit upon His people, so that they will gladly obey His word from their hearts and with their minds.

d) In electing the cross as His divine eschatological judgment on the rejected Man:

— The Father, in His divine eschatological judgment, sent Jesus to the cross in our place. The mystery of Christ’s incarnation reveals God’s love for humanity by His coming for us and His judgment against all iniquity on the cross. Barth takes up the work of Christ’s atonement on the cross under the heading “The Judge Judged in our Place”:

His the sin which we commit on it; His the accusation, the judgment and the curse which necessarily fall on us there. He is the unrighteous amongst those who can no longer be so because He was and is for them. He is the burdened amongst those who have been freed from their burden by Him. He is the condemned amongst those who are pardoned because the sentence which destroys them is directed against Him.  

The Subject and the Object of God’s election is also the rejected Man because God “did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us all” (Rom. 8:32).

— The redeemer Christ chooses solidarity with the dead through the judgment of the cross, “even to tasting reprobation, death and hell.” The claim is not without Scriptural and traditional bases, such as the allusions in Matt. 12:40; Acts 2:31; Eph. 4:9. The earlier Apostles’ Creed (c. 390 AD) also reads, “he

77 CD IV/1:236-37.
78 Balthasar, Karl Barth, 177.
[Christ] descended into hell . . .” Moreover, from His death on the cross and the descent into hell, He “arose as the great raiser of the dead”79 “in unbroken communion with the Father”80 through the Holy Spirit.

— The Holy Spirit raised the Son with power from death (Rom. 1:4; 8:11; 1 Pet. 3:18).81 He also went into hell (“ἐν ὃ” in I Pet. 3:19 refers to the Holy Spirit) with Christ to preach to the spirits in prison (1 Pet. 3:19).

Balthasar points out that “this happening gives the measure of the Father’s mission in all its amplitude: the ‘exploration’ of Hell is an event of the (economic) Trinity.”82

e) In the definitive act on the cross, the Trinity cleansed consciences from deeds that lead to death, in order that the elect may serve the living God (Heb. 9:14):

— On the cross, the Father accepted the offering of the unblemished blood of His Son. The propitiating work of Christ’s shed blood demonstrated the Father’s righteous judgment against sin, while sparing the reprobate who deserved the judgment (Rom. 3:23-26).

— The Son is the elect High Priest, the mediator of the new covenant; through the cross He offered Himself unblemished to God the Father (Rom. 3:25; Heb. 9:11, 12, 14, 15).

— The Holy Spirit showed that the value of the blood of the Old Testament sacrifices is a type of the much greater efficacy of the blood of Christ (Heb. 9:8). First, it was the eternal Spirit that took Christ’s offering on the cross,

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79 Abelard, Romans, 91.
80 Cf. Torrance, Space, Time and Resurrection (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmanns, 1976), 54.
81 Ibid., 270.
82 Balthasar, Karl Barth, 174-75.
offered it to God the Father, and applied it to the cleansing of guilty
consciences that were defiled with sin from dead works (Heb. 9:14). Second,
the Holy Spirit enables the elect to serve the living God by sanctifying and
renewing the soul through His leading and the guidance of His Word (Jn.
17:17; Rom. 12:2; 15:16; 1 Cor. 6:11; Gal. 5:18).

f) In His election of men and women to eternal life:

— God the Father willed man and elected man with the promise of blessedness
and eternal life\(^{83}\) (Jn. 3:15, 16; Tit. 1:2). Eternal life is the life that the Eternal
God wants to share with humanity. It is the gift of the Eternal God through the
death and resurrection of His Son (Rom. 6:23; 5:18, cf. 4:25; Tit. 3:7). It is
promised (I Jn. 2:25) and was assured by the “predestined will” (Eph. 1:5) of
the Eternal God (Jn. 6:40).

— God the Son is the source of everlasting life (Isa. 9:6; Jn. 6:54, 10:28, 17:2, 3; 1
Jn. 5:11). He is the author of eternal life in that, through His death for our sins
on the cross, we are delivered from the damnation of sin because “the Judge
was judged in our place.” Concurrently, through His resurrection for our
justification, we are recipients of the gift of eternal life, which is presented to
all men (Rom. 5:18).

— God the Spirit, who raised Jesus from the dead, will quicken our mortal bodies
unto eternal life (Rom. 1:4, 8:11). What the Spirit means for our life is that His
indwelling sets us free from the law of sin and death (Rom. 8:2). He is an
assurance, guaranteeing the future metamorphosis of this mortal body into
eternal life (2 Cor. 5:4-5). When the Spirit enters into human hearts, it brings in

\(^{83}\) CD II/2:169.
the light of resurrection and the knowledge of God, showing the contrast between sin and righteousness, between death and resurrection. “But by the same illumination, the contrast is overcome and dissolved.”\(^{84}\) The absolute miracle of resurrection through the Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45; Rom. 8:2) transforms this altogether corruptible body and clothes it with the incorruptible; the mortal with the immortal; the dishonorable with the glorious; the feeble with the powerful; the natural with the spiritual (1 Cor. 15:42-54a). The law of sin and death is helplessly disarmed, disengaged, deposed, destroyed and swallowed up by the Spirit of Life in victory (1 Cor. 15:54b; Heb. 2:14; Isa. 25:8).

g) In creating one new elect community through the cross, from both covenantal Israel and the Gentiles who were foreign to the covenant of promise, the Trinity acted in the following ways:

— God the Father reconciled the elect Israel and the non-elect Gentiles through the cross, by which Christ put to death their hostility (Eph. 2:15-17). The air of superiority of the elect over the non-elect is consequently removed in this new community of God. It is also the intent of God the Father that the elect community (the church) should make known the “manifold wisdom of God” in joining the Gentiles with Israel as joint heirs in Christ (Eph. 3:6-12).

— Christ the Son brought the foreigners near to the covenants of the promise established by God. He made peace between the elect and the non-elect by destroying the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility through the blood of the His cross (Gal. 3:17; Eph. 2:12-17). It is the cross of Christ that fully reveals the “mystery” of the intention of God and His eternal purpose—accomplished

\(^{84}\) Barth, Romans, 288.
in Christ—to include the world in His salvific plan (Eph. 3:2-12). This “mystery” which Paul speaks of in Eph. 3, referring to the election of the Gentiles, was not unknown to the Old Testament (Isa. 49:6; 56:6, 7).

However, the Israel of the time did not know it to the same extent as it has now been made known (Acts 10:9-45; 11:18-21; Eph. 3:3). The “mystery” of reconciling the world—both Israel and Gentiles—is planned according to the purpose of God in His election of grace (Rom. 11:5) from eternity, which shall extend to all times\(^85\) (Eph. 3:11; Rom. 9:11).

— The Holy Spirit unites (ἐν, by, cf. 1 Cor. 12:13) the elect Israel and the non-elect Gentiles through the suffering of the cross into one new body. He then brings, leads and moves (προσαγωγή, access, cf. Rom. 5:2; Eph. 2:18; 3:12) each individual to the Father to become a member of the elect community, God’s household (οἰκεῖοι τοῦ θεοῦ). The oneness in one Spirit (ἐν ἑνὶ πνεύματι) is sealed (σφραγίζω, Eph. 1:13) and assured (ἀρραβών, Eph. 1:14) through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (κατοικία τοῦ θεοῦ, Eph. 2:22, cf. 1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19) in each of the individuals purchased by the price of Christ’s blood shed on the cross. It is the Spirit that reveals this “mystery,” namely that through the gospel of the cross of Christ, “the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise of Christ Jesus” (Eph. 3:5, 6).

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\(^85\) The verb μενή is used to contrast with the verb ἐκπέπτοκεν in 9:6, meaning that God’s words never fail. His purpose will remain, no matter what man may do (Morris, Romans, 356). Paul, by using the present μενή, may stand, in Rom. 9:11 instead of the aorist μενή, might stand, and thus he extends this consequence of the fact to all times (Godet, Romans, 349). Lenski understands this verb as denoting an action permanently present and in operation (Lenski, Romans, 601).
h) In building and unifying the community of the elect:

— God the Father is Lord over all and through all and in all, calling and inviting humanity to one hope, one faith and one baptism (Rom. 8:30; 11:29; Eph. 4:4-6; cf. Deut. 6:4; Zech. 14:9; Rom. 11:36).

— Jesus the Christ through the cross descended to the lower, earthly regions in order to ascend on high. He graces the elect community with gifted roles to prepare the community “for the works of the service, so that the body of Christ may be built up” until the community reaches “unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become[s] mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.” (Eph. 4:7-13).

— The Holy Spirit keeps the community in unity through the bond of peace and love (Eph. 4:2-4; cf. 1:4; 4:15, 16; 1 Cor. 12:13; Col. 3:14). The only content of the “one Spirit” (Eph. 4:4) is Jesus (John 16:4), which is the true basis and source of love and unity.

i) In the proclamation of God’s Kingdom and human freedom through the electing works of the Crucified and the Resurrected One:

— God the Father reconciled the world to Himself in Christ, not counting men’s sins against them (2 Cor. 5:19, Eph. 2:16; cf. 2 Chron. 29:24; Ps. 32:1, 2).

— Jesus the Son, under the unction of the Spirit of the Lord, proclaimed freedom to the suffering world as the year of the Lord’s favor (Lk. 4:18-19; cf. Isa. 61:1, 2).
— The Holy Spirit was poured out by the Father on all flesh, meaning all those persons who define the elect community, whether men or women, Jews or Gentiles, slaves or free, strong or weak. All will be filled with His new life in Christ (Mk. 1:8; Acts 2:1-11; Rom. 8:2; Gal. 3:14; cf. Joel 2:28).

j) In the sanctifying works within Trinitarian election:

— The very God of peace sanctifies the elect, keeping their spirit and soul and body blameless at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ (I Thess. 5:23). Scripture proclaims that God is thrice holy (Isa. 6:3). In His complete and perfect holiness, God reveals Himself as such in the establishment and maintenance of His fellowship with humanity, and He demonstrates it by His wrath and judgment of sin on the cross. As Barth puts it, “He it is who wills and accomplishes, not only His own turning to man, but man’s conversion to Him, the claiming of man for His service.” In the election and calling of His people for His service and as His witness, He charges them, “Keep My decrees and follow them. I am the Lord who sanctifies you” (Lev. 20:8). Existentially, sanctification begins with the regeneration and renewal of the mind in the light of God’s mercy (Rom. 12:1-2). This transformation of thought is where a “turning about” takes place, by which men and women are directed to a new behavior which is caused by the word and work of God alone.

— Jesus the Christ suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through His own blood (Heb. 13:12). Sanctification is not the goal of

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86 CD IV/2:500.
87 Ibid. 501.
88 Barth, Romans, 436.
justification but rather the process. Edwards specifies that “Sanctification is justification in action.”\textsuperscript{89} He further explains: “Justification is the impetus of sanctification, and sanctification is the unfolding of justification.”\textsuperscript{90} In Romans 6-8, Paul moves from the his discourse on what it means to be “freely justified by faith” to the “sanctification of the new life.” It is only through the cross of Christ that we are freely justified by faith. The cross is the clear dividing line between “before” and “after” in regard to our being justified in Christ (Rom. 6:6). On that side of the cross is reprobation, on this side of the cross is election. On that side of the cross justification is desired, on this side of the cross sanctification is required. God has from eternity predestined those who love Him to be conformed to the likeness of His Son (Rom. 8:29), which is the chief end of sanctification.

— Changing from inside out, the Spirit does the work of transforming the elect in the community into the likeness of Christ, to which they are predestined (Rom. 8:29) with ever-increasing glory (2 Cor. 3:18). The emphasis of Paul in these texts is twofold. First, God’s purpose in election is the work of conforming to the likeness of the Son. Second, the transforming promise is fulfilled through the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit, because it is through the new covenant that the elect are given the Spirit of the Lord. The Holy Spirit sanctifies even the Gentiles\textsuperscript{91} as they hear the gospel (Rom. 15:16; 2 Thess. 2:13). The work of the Holy Spirit in regeneration is both repentance

\textsuperscript{89} Edwards, Romans, 156.
\textsuperscript{90} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{91} Paul contends that if the offering of the Gentiles can be acceptable to God, insofar as they are sanctified by the Holy Spirit, the offering of the Israelites must be much more acceptable.
and sanctification (Rom. 1:4; 6:6, 19). The Holy Spirit is not only interested in calling sinners to repentance, He is also earnest (Eph. 4:30) in calling them to sanctification. Sanctification, which the Spirit effects in the life of the believers, is to honor God as one reorients daily life to the reality of one’s new life in Christ. Before repentance and regeneration, a man lived to himself as his end; but now in Christ, he lives for God as his end. Calvin presents a dual aspect in his doctrine of sanctification: mortification and vivification. Calvin emphasizes that the life of sanctification begins with a daily mortification or denial of self through bearing one’s cross, in order to wean the new man from an excessive love of this present life. On the other hand, vivification is the desire to live for God in a holy and devoted manner brought about by the Spirit. In vivification, one may enjoy full fellowship with the Lord, freely exercise goodness among men, and aspire to the blessed hope to come.

k) This divine election can also be described and understood *commissionally* in the Trinitarian *perichoretic* manifestation as follows:

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93 As for the believer’s response to the grace of Christ, Calvin desires “that Christ’s honor be kept whole and undiminished” (*Inst.*, III. 4.27). Calvin further comments that in 1 Cor. 1:30-31, “Paul accommodates those words to this use when he teaches that every part of our salvation rests with Christ that we may glory in the Lord alone.” (Ibid., 13.1). Accordingly, Calvin maintains that the honor of God is one of the primary tasks of the original integrity of humanity and the elect. Cf. Marijn de Kroon, *The Honor of God and human salvation: A Contribution to an Understanding of Calvin’s Theology According to His Institutes* (New York: T & T Clark, 2001), 23.
94 *Inst.*, III.3.3.
95 Ibid., 7.1.
96 Ibid., 6.5.
97 Ibid., 7.2.
98 Ibid., 7.3; 9.1, 2 & 6.
In the passion of Christ from incarnation through resurrection, we find the sequence: 

Father – Spirit – Son

After the ascension of Christ from supplication to world mission, we find the sequence:  

Son – Father – Spirit

In the exaltation of Christ from adoration to glorification, we find the sequence:  

Spirit – Son – Father

1) In the case of those who reject God’s exceeding provision through Christ, the Trinity also participates in authorizing eternal condemnation.  

God’s wrath and dreadful judgment stands against those who spat and trampled on the accomplished work of the cross (Jn. 3:36; Rom. 1:18-32; 5:9; Heb. 10:27-31). Humans are condemned for their wicked deeds (Rom. 1:18, 29; 2:8; 3:5). They cannot reconcile themselves to God unless it is effected based on God’s propitiation. Paul reemphasizes this point again in the figural pairings and the theme of mercy in Romans 9. When God’s wrath is revealed along with His righteousness (Rom. 1:17 and 18), it provides the basis for the necessity of the Gospel (Rom. 1:17; 5:9). However, if the Gospel of Christ’s work on the cross has been disgraced and trampled in deliberate contempt for godlessness and wickedness, God’s wrath is revealed. Against such rebellion there can be reserved only the wrath and judgment of God (Heb. 10:29).

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100 Writer’s suggestion based on John 14:16; 16:7; Acts 1:4, 5.
101 The reprobate have not been forsaken by God, though their ways are full of guilt, until they have utterly forsaken their God (Jer. 51:5, cf. Hos. 4:6; Lev. 26:14-45; 2 Ki. 17:15-20).
102 God’s wrath is generally associated with the wrath of the Father (nearly 30 times). Only five times does the Scripture mention the anger of Christ (Ps. 2:11; Mk. 3:5; 10:13-16 and 11:15-17; Rev. 6:16).
— Severe punishment is deserved by the one who has trampled underfoot and profaned the blood of the covenant accomplished by the elect Christ on the cross (Heb. 10:29).

— The sin of one who has despised the grace and mercy of God brought about by the Holy Spirit through the suffering of the cross is an insult and blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, and thus deserves the vindictive justice of God. From the contemptible ruin of such apostates, there remains no more sacrifice for such sins. There remains no other sacrifice on earth that can replace the eternal blood of Christ shed on the cross, for it alone can cleanse an infinite number of sins committed by the sinners of the world. The Trinitarian election of the cross is the only means and resort determined by the Triune God to save the reprobate (Matt. 12:31, 32; Heb. 10:26, 29).
CHAPTER 5

TRINITARIAN ELECTION IN THE THEOLOGY OF THE CROSS (II)

Crux sola est nostra Theologia
— Martin Luther

The examination of the two figural pairs of Isaac and Ishmael on one hand, and Jacob and Esau on the other, is the crux for grasping the mystery and the purpose of God’s election. That election is centered in the cross of Christ. The historical analysis of Jacob and Esau’s descendants leads us to Jesus and Herod, and thus to the theologia crucis as the essential concept in Romans 9. This chapter argues that the cross is in fact the proper and central theological lens for understanding Paul’s view of election.

THE ELECTIVE PURSUIT OF THE DIVINE ELEOS IN THE THEOLOGY OF THE CROSS

To understand the mystery of God’s election, one must first look intently at the cross and its Trinitarian suffering. Bonaventure, a medieval philosopher and theologian, stressed that one can only understand God properly through the Crucified One. It is the cross of the electing God that reveals the ways and the works of God in His divine mercy (eleos). The cross of Christ is where the electing God demonstrates His love for the weak, the foolish, the sinful, the ungodly, the wicked, and the reprobate, in order for the Spirit to convert and make them strong, wise, righteous, godly, good, and elect. Concretely, election comes to

\[1\] Luther, WA 5.176.
\[2\] “The way, however, is only through the most burning love of the Crucified, Who so transformed Paul, ‘caught up into the third heaven’ [II Cor., 12, 2], into Christ, that he said, ‘With Christ I am nailed to the cross, yet I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me’ [Gal., 2, 19] . . . Therefore the symbol of the six-winged Seraph signifies the six stages of illumination, which begin with God’s creatures and lead up to God, to Whom no one can enter properly save through the Crucified.” See Bonaventure, The Mind’s Journey to God (Indianapolis: Hackett Pub. Co., 1993), Prologue 3.
humankind only in the form of forgiveness. Forgiveness is what took place when Christ suffered on the cross whatever humanity ought to have suffered for its own sins; and in this suffering the divine eleos is fully declared. The ensuing questions remain:

a) What does the theology of the cross claim and entail regarding resurrection? In other words, what place does resurrection have in the discussion of the theology of the cross? This is an important question, as many critiques of the theologia crucis are founded on the failure to hold the cross and resurrection together. To hold a meaningful discussion of the doctrine of election through the cross, we need to begin with the triumph of the cross in His resurrection.

b) How does the theology of the cross result in a better reading of the doctrine of election (what Barth calls “Election in Christ”), as contrasted to Calvin’s system of deterministic theology?

c) In what way does the cross’s pursuit of divine eleos demonstrate a determination of God’s election of grace, not just for the righteous, but also for the reprobate?

The Centrality of the Cross

Christology and Soteriology both focus on the cross of Jesus Christ. It was Luther who first voiced the idea that the centrality of the cross should be the prism and lens through which we examine our theological reflections and Dogmatics itself. Six months after posting his famous 95 theses, Luther presented the Heidelberg Disputation in critique of the scholastic theology of the Roman Catholic Church. In its place, Luther stressed the necessity of examining theology in light of the cross. Since then, the Heidelberg Disputation has been

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3 CD II/2:315.
4 In his theses 20 and 24, Luther writes: “He deserves to be called a theologian, however, who comprehends the visible and manifest things of God seen through suffering and the cross,” and “Yet that wisdom is not of itself
considered the kernel of Luther’s *theologia crucis*. For Luther, the theological lexis must be modified in the context of the cross of Jesus Christ. Take for example the words *power* and *wisdom*: the apostle Paul states that they are demonstrated in the weakness and the foolishness of the cross (1 Cor. 1:23-25). Significantly, Luther’s *theologia crucis* has drawn the attention of twentieth-century Reformed theologians. Barth writes: “Dogmatics is possible only as a *theologia crucis*.”

Moltmann concurs with Barth in stating that the event of the cross is the nucleus of the “history of God.” He explains, “Christ the crucified alone is ‘man’s true theology and the knowledge of God’. The presupposition is: while indirect knowledge of God is made possible through his works, God’s being can be seen and known directly only in the cross of Christ.” Moltmann further elucidates:

> The death of Jesus on the cross is the centre of all Christian theology. It is not the only theme of theology, but it is in effect the entry to its problems and answers on earth. All Christian statements about God, about creation, about sin and death have their focal point in the crucified Christ. All Christian statements about history, about the church, about faith and sanctification, about the future and about hope stem from the crucified Christ. The multiplicity of the New Testament comes together in the event of the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus and flows out again from it.

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5 *CD* I/1:14.
7 Ibid., 212.
8 Ibid., 204. Quoting Althaus, Moltmann writes, “Christology must be done in the light of the cross: the full and undiminished deity of God is to be found in the complete helplessness, in the final agony of the crucified Jesus, at the point where no ‘divine nature’ is to be seen” (ibid., 206). Hall concurs with the fundamentality of the theology of the cross: “In the question of the person (Christology) and the work (soteriology) of Jesus Christ, the *theologia crucis* has both its beginning and its center.” See Douglas John Hall, *The Cross in Our Context: Jesus and the Suffering World* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 111. Deutschlander makes a similar assertion: “His cross and resurrection are the beginning, the middle, the end, the all-in-all of our theology, our faith in this life and our hope of heaven in the life to come.” See Daniel Deutschlander, *The Theology of the Cross: Reflection on His Cross and Ours* (WI: Northwestern Publishing House, 2008), 1.
McGrath further comments that, “For Moltmann, the cross is either the end of all theology, or else the beginning of all specifically Christian theology . . . As such, for Moltmann as for Luther, the cross of Christ is the decisive epistemological criterion for our knowledge of God.”9 McGrath also notes Jüngel’s emphasis on theologia crucis,

Jüngel expresses this difficult idea thus: “His omnipresence must now be understood on the basis of the actual presence of God in the cross of Jesus, and thus not without a Christologically grounded (christologisch begründet) withdrawal of God. The idea of the omnipresence of God must therefore pass through the eye of the needle of the properly-understood idea of the death of God.”10

Thus, both Christologically and soteriologically, the cross of Jesus Christ must be recognized as a cornerstone of Scripture in the drama of God’s redemption.11 Based on the claims of John 3:16 and Revelation 13:8, Scripture declares that long before there was a cross planted on Mount Golgotha, there was already “a cross in the heart of God.”12 Without the cross, theology tends to wander from the means of grace to dwell more on the severity of God. Without the prism of the cross, theology leads to hegemonic truths, rather than humble faith that appeals to His mercy which transcends divine justice. Without the convergence on the cross, the emphasis on the immutable decree of God becomes stern and distant and rigid, instead of explicating God’s absolute faithfulness in His covenant of love.13 Without the

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9 McGrath, The Making of Modern German Christology, 187.
10 Ibid., 200.
11 Mk. 10:45; Jn. 1:29; 3:14, 16; 8:28; 12:32-33; 1 Cor. 1:17-18, 23-25; 2 Cor. 5:14-21; Gal. 6:14; Col. 1:20; 2:14; Heb. 9:26; Rev. 13:8.
12 Dinsmore penned these illuminating words at the turn of the twentieth century: “There was a cross in the heart of God before there was one planted on the green hill outside Jerusalem” (Charles Allen Dinsmore, Atonement in Literature and Life [New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1906], 232, cited in Hall, The Cross in Our Context, 84).
13 In the Old Testament period, the prophets of God had to constantly rebuke and remind the elect Israel of the mercy of God and His covenant of love, which they were prone to forget because of their distorted concept of their true God (Deut. 4:31; 6:12; Jer. 2:32; 23:27). Similarly in the New Testament, the frequent confrontation between Jesus and the Pharisees displayed the contrast of dwelling either on the mercy or sternness of God. Even Paul’s writing in Romans 10:6-11 corrects such a deviation in the Judaizers’ concept of God, as opposed to the emphasis on “God’s covenantal faithfulness” (Rom. 10:11, cf. Isa. 28:16, I Pet. 2:6) in love through the cross of Christ: “Do not say in your heart, ‘Who will ascend into heaven?’ (cf. Deut. 30:12) (that is, to bring
prominence of the cross, the doctrine of predestination instinctively deviates towards the
destinies of man instead of the unbounded grace and works of the Trinitarian God on the
cross of Jesus Christ.\textsuperscript{14} Deutschlander remarks succinctly, “Where his cross is not, there his
grace, his mercy, is not. Where the cross is not, there he refuses to be and refuses to be found
as Savior.”\textsuperscript{15}

If the cross of Jesus Christ is indeed the measure of our theology, then should not our
approach to, and the basic tenets of, the traditional doctrine of predestination be reevaluated
and scrutinized in the light of \textit{theologia crucis}? Should not the cross, rather than the
decretum absolutum, serve as our validated criterion in developing a clearer understanding of
the doctrine of election? Moreover, within the parameters of \textit{theologia crucis}, the danger of
a one-sided doctrine of election may be avoided. Overall, the claims of \textit{theologia crucis} can
advance beyond the level of personal salvation, extending to a higher view and a richer
understanding of the purpose of the election of grace. From the perspective of \textit{theologia
crucis}, we will be able to fully appreciate the cross as the fountain of salvation and “grasp
how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that
surpasses knowledge” (Eph. 3:18-19).\textsuperscript{16}

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{14} Luther did not stress the doctrine of double predestination as much as Calvin, yet his understanding of
predestination was still influenced by Augustine in dealing with the fate of each individual. Nevertheless,
Luther urged the contemplation of Christ and His cross over unnecessary speculation within the doctrine of
predestination. He recalled how Staupeit once comforted his troubled heart in his own struggle over
predestinarianism with these words: “Why do you torture yourself with these speculations? Look at the wounds
of Christ and at the blood that was shed for you. From these predestination will shine” (\textit{LW} 5:47).
Unfortunately, Luther never discussed the cruciform perspective in his doctrine of predestination in a sustained
manner, which is precisely what I will attempt to do, seeking to incorporate the Pauline theology of the cross
into the biblical understanding of the doctrine of predestination.
\textsuperscript{15} Deutschlander, \textit{Cross}, 114.
\textsuperscript{16} “The salvation accomplished by Christ’s death of reconciliation cannot be merely historical, but that it has its
eternal foundation in the love of God” (Berkouwer, \textit{Divine Election}, 168); cf. also ibid., 216.
\end{footnotesize}
The Triumph of the Cross

Paul at the beginning of Romans links together both the certainty of Christ’s election (ὁριζω, decree, ordain) and His resurrection, according to the declaration of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 1:4). Hitchcock states that both are “incorporative decision-events” in which humans are brought to Christ, and together they can be conceived as a “double-axiom of the gospel.”\(^{17}\) In Romans 6:5, Paul further teaches that those elected in Christ are united together with Him by participation in His cross and resurrection.\(^{18}\) Thus, the theology of the cross does not dwell solely on the suffering of Christ on the cross. While acknowledging the indispensable death of Christ on the cross for humankind, Luther never fixated on the suffering alone. His theology of the cross highlights the triumph of the cross and the Spirit of God who raised Jesus from death on the third day. Luther writes, “To be born anew, one must consequently first die and then be raised up with the Son of Man.”\(^{19}\) Moltmann concurs, “Christian faith lives from the raising of the crucified Christ.”\(^{20}\)

The New Testament Scriptures most often link resurrection to the cross of Christ. First of all, the death of Christ is sometimes called His glorification (Jn. 12:23, 24; 13:31; 17:1), for on the cross Christ conquered and triumphed over sin, death and enmity (Rom. 5:10; 1 Cor. 15:54-57, Eph. 2:15, 16; Rev. 12:11). Secondly, the resurrection of Christ is also called His glorification (Lk. 24:26; 1 Pet. 1:11), insofar as Christ enters into glory through His resurrection from death on the cross. His glory comes from the Father, who glorified Him with the divine glory through the power of His resurrection. Therefore, the

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\(^{18}\) When we speak of the cross, we invariably speak of the resurrection, since what is revealed in the cross, in all its uniqueness and differentiation from all others, was disclosed by Christ’s resurrection through the power of the Spirit.

\(^{19}\) See Luther’s explanation for *HD* thesis 24 (*LW* 31:55).

cross and resurrection are both ascribed to the process of glorification. The apostles in their epistles always correlate resurrection with the suffering and death of Christ on the cross (Rom. 1:4; 10:7, 9; Phil. 2:8, 9; 3:10, 11; Col. 2:14, 15; Heb. 6:2; 12:2; 1 Pet. 1:3; 2:24).

Based on this connection, Paul declares the triumphant cross (Col. 2:14, 15)\(^{21}\) of Christ to be his glory (Gal. 6:14). Indeed, the theology of the cross entails in its soteriological content the resurrection as the finished work of the incarnated Christ. The confession of the way of God in the cross of Christ and the confession of the work of God in the resurrection of Christ are inseparably bound together. They do not overlap one another, but expound each other mutually. In other words, the distinctiveness of resurrection within the theology of the cross includes the following: a) there will be no resurrection without the cross—there will be no “imputed” justification of resurrection without the “substitutionary” condemnation on the cross (Rom. 4:25); b) there will be no “Yes” of God in His exaltation through resurrection without Christ’s “No” to glorification in His obedience even unto death (Phil. 2:5-11); c) without resurrection, the cross of Christ would be an empty symbol and His death on the cross would be ineffectual and meaningless (1 Cor. 15:14-17). Consequently, the triumph of the cross demands that there is a resurrection, and the glorification of the resurrection demands that there is the cross of Christ.

In his *Heidelberg Disputation*, Luther affirms that the theologian of the cross must have the humility to see his own sins. He must fall before the mercy of God and look to the cross and suffering of Christ in order to obtain the grace of “salvation, life, and resurrection”

\(^{21}\) θριαμβεύσας αὐτοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ (triumphing over them in it or Him). According to the context, a more likely reading of “αὐτῷ” should be the cross. Eph. 2:16 favors this translation, “reconcile . . . through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity” (NKJV). If “in Him (Christ)” should be understood, however, the cross is still the means and the place where God triumphed over the principalities and powers of sin and death (Rom. 8:38; Eph. 1:19, 20).
The theologian of the cross should not take any credit for his own wisdom and works, but rather through humility receive them as gifts from God. Through the works of the Trinitarian cross, one recognizes that “an action which is alien to God’s nature results in a deed belonging to His very nature: He makes a person a sinner so that He may make him righteous.” In this statement, Luther introduces the dialectic between the \textit{opus proprium Dei} (the work proper to God) and the \textit{opus alienum Dei} (the work alien to God) in his explanation of thesis 16. The revelation of God is concealed in the shame, weakness and suffering of the cross, and God Himself is not immediately recognizable as the God of glory, honor and supremacy.

In dealing with the request for self-glorification by James and John, Jesus’ reply reveals that the disciples’ human desire for glory and power had blinded them to the nature of Christ and His election to the cross. They failed to recognize that the \textit{opus alienum} and \textit{opus proprium} have their focal point in the cross of Christ. Therefore, Christ reminds them of the purpose of His election: He did not come to be served or to exercise lordship, but He became a servant to give His life as a ransom for many (Mk. 10:45). The reason that the disciples did not understand the \textit{opus alienum Dei} and the cross of Christ is that “its meaning was hidden from them” (Lk. 18:34). This dialectic leads Luther to assert that God’s works are hidden \textit{abscondita sub contrariis} (concealed under the form of the opposite). The fundamental claim here is not merely that God is known through suffering (even the suffering of the individual), but that God makes Himself known through suffering. It is

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22 LW 31:50, 55.
23 Ibid., 50-51.
24 Ibid.
26 McGrath, Luther’s Theology of the Cross, 157.
27 Ibid., 155.
through faith alone that this insight can be received;28 while human reason scandals the cross, faith embraces the cross with joy.29 The hiddenness of this revelation is supremely revealed in the opus alienum of the suffering of the cross, through which God works in His opus proprium. Hence God’s love and mercy in “salvation, life and resurrection” are completely unveiled, embodying the truth that it is in the cross where God chooses to fully accomplish (“finished,” Jn. 17:4, 19:30) His ways and works of election. It is in the resurrection that God confirms Christ’s election and assures it with power.

### The Election of the Cross

The cross is the analogical event30 of God’s love, in which the Triune God becomes accessible as God pro nobis. The cross of Christ is the epitome of God’s self-revelation as the Triune God who loves the world. Likewise, if “election is that which takes place at the very centre of the divine self-revelation”31 within salvation history, then the cross of Jesus Christ is the quintessence of the election of grace, as it reaches to the perishing human race for the sake of all humanity. In His cross, the fundamental nature of the Trinitarian being is revealed analogously and theologically as Love (1 Jn. 4:9, 10).32 “The Lamb that was slain from the creation of the world” (Rev. 13:8)33 establishes that the cross in its temporal yet

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28 Ibid., 150-51, 155.
29 Cf. ibid., 158, the cross “confounded” reason. In 1 Cor. 1:18, 22-25, Paul speaks of the cross as a scandal to the Greeks because it is the “foolishness of God” and to the Jews because it is the “weakness of God.” But the elected (κλητοὶς) embrace it as the power and the wisdom of God.
30 The cross is the chief motif and analogy of the God who comes to Himself. Cf. Eberhard Jüngel, God as Mystery of the World, trans. Darrell L. Guder (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1983), 42. In the section on “The Gospel as Analogous Talk about God,” Jüngel asserts that in responsible talk about God, attention must be given to the theology of analogy. Kant for one “establishes analogy as the means for more precise determination of an idea of God which otherwise remains empty.” Jüngel concurs: “Analogy serves, therefore, to make expressible in speech the unknowable God in His unknowability” (ibid., 283, cf. 288, 299).
31 CD II/2:59.
32 Cf. the second consideration as well as section b of the excursus in the previous chapter.
33 Some translations read “from the creation of the world” after “written” instead of “the Lamb that was slain.” However, most scholars prefer the latter based on the syntax (sentence structure) of the Greek text. Furthermore, the translation chosen above is clearly reflected in Jn. 17:24; 1 Pet. 1:20, cf. Matt. 25:34.
“unabridged historicity” was determined to be the fulfillment of God’s “pre-temporal
decision of election.”34 In God’s self-revelation, His election of grace confronts the fallen
human race with an alien love and mercy that was made tangible through the cross.

Concerning election and the cross, Klappert explains:

In the reconciling event of the cross he is the Subject, the Qualitative Other,
the Judge—who as such also judges. He is too the Object, the one “just”
human being who identifies absolutely with the creature in all its sinful
humanity—who as such is also judged. For in the cross Jesus Christ is made
sinful and degraded that the creature be made just and raised up. He is then
himself the dynamic Message of the cross concerning this exchange, the actual
Subject of the theologia crucis.35

**To Reveal the Hidden God**

The hiddenness of God is acknowledged explicitly throughout the Scripture (Ex.
33:20; Num. 12:8; Jn. 1:18; 6:46; 1 Tim. 6:16; Heb. 11:27; 1 Jn. 4:12). This “hiddenness” is
acknowledged in two ways. In the first place, God is a Spirit; therefore the nature of God’s
being is invisible to bodily eyes. The revelation that God gave through the Old Testament
prophets was very limited and inadequate, in comparison with what was revealed through
Christ as the Logos incarnatus. In the second place, the conceptual understanding of the
ways and works of God remained hidden from the religious leaders and the populace of
Jesus’ day (Isa. 53: 1-4; Jn. 7:28; 8:19, 55; Rom. 10:19), and even from His disciples (Mk.
9:32; Lk. 9:45; Jn. 2:19, 22; 12:16).

The ways and works of God can and must only be interpreted through the cross of
Jesus Christ. The very divine ‘I Am’ is truly and altogether revealed at the cross.36 Thus

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34 Hunsinger, “Election and Trinity,” in *Trinity and Election*, 98.
35 Rosalene Bradbury and Murray Rae, *Cross Theology: The Classical Theologia Crucis and Karl Barth’s
Modern Theology of the Cross* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications), 2011, 176; cf. note 25: Klappert,
*Auferweckung des Gekreuzigten*, 225.
36 John 8:28, “So Jesus said, ‘When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am.’”
Luther writes, “He deserves to be called a theologian, however, who comprehends the visible and manifest things of God seen through suffering and the cross.”\(^{37}\) The empirical wisdom of humankind perceives the humility, the weakness and the foolishness of the cross as the antithesis of deity; hence God’s ways and works remain concealed. It is only through the cross of Christ that God’s wisdom is revealed as hidden under His folly, His strength as concealed under His weakness, and His mercy as latent under His wrath.\(^{38}\)

In the same way, to understand the mystery of God’s election, we must fix our eyes on the cross. It is the cross of the electing God that has finally lifted the veil (cf. Matt. 27:51) that concealed the alien and proper works of God. It is the cross of the elected Man that has unfolded the mystery of the doctrine of predestination through His suffering. It is the cross of the Subject and Object of election that has confounded the wisdom of the world and made known the wisdom of God,\(^{39}\) which is revealed in His opposite—His God-forsakenness. How so? According to Moltmann, “God is revealed in the cross of Christ who was abandoned by God,”\(^{40}\) indicating that the historical event of the cross shapes and determines our understanding of God. This revelation compels us to reevaluate the traditional concepts of God in His determination. Moltmann further proposes that the epistemological principle of the theology of the cross is expressed by a dialectical principle, the paradox of the cross, in revealing the hidden God:

\(^{37}\) *LW* 31:52. He further writes: “He who does not know Christ does not know God hidden in suffering” (ibid., 53).

\(^{38}\) McGrath, *Luther’s Theology of the Cross*, 155.

\(^{39}\) Cf. *CD* II/1:437; II/2:146. Barth also states that the resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ lifted the veil, i.e., that He was manifested in His glory and His perfect act of redemption was proclaimed (CD IV/2:133).

\(^{40}\) Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, 27. Deutschlander likewise says that “God hides . . . his glory. He does not give himself to us or draw us to himself in majesty; he does it only in shame, not in power but only in weakness, not in victory but only in defeat, not in mighty acts but in lowly words, not in spectacular displays but in the most common of signs. And it is just in that shame, that lowliness, that weakness and apparent defeat that he saves . . . Expressed most simply: He reveals himself and gives himself only in Christ, the crucified” (Deutschlander, *The Theology of the Cross*, 118).
As applied to Christian theology, this means that God is only revealed as 'God' in his opposite, in his Godlessness and God-forsakenness. In concrete terms: God is revealed in the cross of Christ who was abandoned by God. His grace is revealed in sinners. His righteousness is revealed in the unrighteousness and those without rights, and his election of grace in the damned . . . It is the dialectical knowledge of God in his opposite which first brings heaven down to the earth of those who are abandoned by God, and opens heaven to the godless.  

In the questions of election, theologians have constantly probed the divine attributes like eternality, immutability, omniscience and sovereignty. All these attributes by themselves are distant and unapproachable. Balthasar articulates fittingly, “The Cross is the ‘No’ that is opposed to power, and it is a revolution in the concept of God himself. People say that God is almightiness, but almightiness cannot be loved, and so the mighty one is poorer than all. ‘Only weakness is loved.’”  

Almightiness stirs up fear and may draw people to worship in awe. Yet there may exist an emotional and a relational gulf between the recipient of worship and the worshippers. Although the cross outwardly is a sign of weakness, intrinsically it is the suffering of the Servant (Isa. 53) who “suffered in our stead” and “died for our sake.” The mount of crucifixion became the floodgate of God’s pursuing mercy and drew the reprobate sinners to love the ‘God in weakness’ on the cross (I Jn. 4:10, 19).  

Correspondingly, Forde raises this issue concerning the predisposition of those theologians who labor with philosophical suppositions to solve, remove, or in some way

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42 Balthasar, *Karl Barth*, 64.
43 The “suffering Servant” is never attractive under the “theology of glory” (Isa. 53:2-3; 1 Cor. 1:23). God draws us to Himself through the weakness of the cross, not the charisma of glory.
explain away the problem raised by the theoretical terrifying attributes. Forde insightfully presents a solution from the perspective of the cross:

There is no abstract theological solution to the problem of the divine majesty. The only solution is the cross itself and the subsequent proclamation of the word of the cross . . . The only refuge is the word of the cross in the here and now. Through the preaching of the cross in the living present, not through theological explanations, we are defended from the terror of the divine majesty.

The account of the rending of the veil of the temple at the moment when Jesus gave up His spirit on the cross substantiates the aforementioned claims of Balthasar, Forde and Deutschlander. The rending of the veil “signifies that this godforsaken death is the climactic event of revelation in the Gospel narrative. More than that, it transfers the place of God’s presence from the hiddenness in the holy of holies to the openly godforsaken cross of the dead Jesus.” The divine attributes in the hiddenness of the Holy of Holies are revealed at that precise moment on the cross. It no longer represents the terror of the divine majesty, but One who is meek and lowly (Matt. 11:29).

The hiddenness of God’s attributes can only be revealed and understood in the suffering of the elected Man on the cross. In Rom. 1:3, 4 Paul implies that the cross is both the archway and the keystone of the whole election of Jesus Christ, demonstrating God’s determination in the whole drama of salvation history. The meaning of ὁριζω (declare, destine, determine, disclose) in Rom. 1:4 has been thoroughly discussed by Erasmus. He even drew comparisons between patristic and medieval writers in regard to the verse’s meaning, including Chrysostom, Theophylact, Origen, Jerome, the Greek scholia, and

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46 Ibid., 74-75.
Aquinas. In verse 3, Paul begins by stating that Christ is the Son of God, and in verse 4, he concludes by again declaring (revealing) Him to be the Son of God. But between these references to the eternal Son of God, Jesus is described as the Son of Man, the historical Man in the historical event of historical reality. According to verse 3, the Son of God became the Son of Man through *incarnation* (He was made of the seed of David according to flesh). In verse 4, He was revealed by the Holy Spirit to be the Son of God again through His *resurrection* from death with glorious power. Jüngel skillfully describes the revelation of this hiddenness of the Son of God by observing that God’s becoming (incarnation) was swallowed up in perishing (cross), and perishing was itself swallowed up in God’s becoming (resurrection).

**To Suffer as the Pursuit of the Divine Eleos**

The pursuit of the divine *eleos* is repeatedly brought out in Romans 9-11. First, it is expressed through Paul’s anguished plea for his own race (9:2; 10:1), which is a reflection of God’s own sorrow for the fallen condition of the whole human race (Isa. 53:3). Second, the divine *eleos* is articulated in His calling of the Gentiles, who were considered by the Israelites to be outside God’s covenantal election (Rom. 9:25). Paul uses the vivid metaphor of God stretching out His hands seeking with immense mercy to those who are disobedient and obstinate, especially the covenantal people of God (10:21; Isa. 65:1). In his analysis of Abelard’s analytical argument regarding Christ’s atonement based on the goodness of God, Weingart asserts that there is no extrinsic necessity for God to atone in any particular way.

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49 τοῦ γενομένου ἐκ σπέρματος Δαβίδ κατὰ σάρκα.
50 Jüngel, *The Doctrine of the Trinity: God’s Being Is in Becoming*, trans. Horton Harris (Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans, 1976), 107. Cf. “God’s persistence in his historicality in the face of the death of Jesus Christ is a new act also. In the face of the death of the Son of God who died as man, ‘God’s being remains in becoming’ means the new act of the resurrection, which happens to the Son of God and with him to the man Jesus” (ibid., 88).
“God’s only necessity was in His inherent need to fulfill His attribute by acting out of love to save humanity.”⁵¹ Employing the dialectic method in his commentary on Romans, Abelard stresses the pursuing love of God out of His own intrinsic nature in His election of grace.⁵² Third, the divine eleos is highlighted by its contrast with the self-justification of the Israelites (Rom. 9:31-32). They confidently pursued righteousness not by faith in the divine eleos but by the legalism of the law, or even rebellion against God’s law, justifying the pursuit of human ethelothreskia in the manner which we find among those influenced by the Colossian heresy (Col. 2:23).⁵³ Paul is rebuking the Colossians for their legalism in trying to reach God by keeping a list of rules. These include the observation of “religious festival[s], New Moon celebration or Sabbath” (v. 16), common in Jewish mysticism, or rules such as “do not handle, do not taste or do not touch” (v. 21) in Gnosticism. Ethelothreskia and eleos are diametrically opposed to each other. According to Paul, ethelothreskia is rooted in pride⁵⁴ (Rom. 10:3), and those who pursue it try to brush aside the way of the cross as foolishness (1 Cor. 1:18-25). But eleos stems from the suffering of the cross, where God reaches down to the human race in mercy through the election of Christ.

The election of the man Jesus is specifically His election to suffering, because the elected Jesus Christ was foreordained to suffer and to die (κατὰ τὸ ὑπερήμενον, it has been decreed, Lk. 22:22, cf. 18:31-32; 22:37; Isa. 53:12; Phil. 2:8). The New Testament understands this act of suffering as the basic form and reason of the divine election of grace (Rom. 11:5).⁵⁵ It can only be an election of grace, because of the very fact that God, who

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⁵² Abelard, *Romans*, 349.
⁵³ ἑθελοθρησκία, self-made or self-imposed religion (cf. Lev. 10:1-3; 1 Sam. 13:8-14; 2 Chron. 26:16-21).
⁵⁴ “[They] sought to establish their own.”
⁵⁵ *CD II/2*:120, 122.
could be satisfied with “the inner glory of His threefold being,” is not satisfied; His inner glory overflows and displays itself outwardly. His will that the man Jesus be the first-born of all creation “is grace, sovereign grace, a condescension inconceivably tender.” Such a determination in the will of God to give humanity the opportunity to participate in His “sonship”, the thesis of predestination, is eminently grace. Thus, Mark stresses that “the Son of Man must suffer, be rejected . . .” (8:31). This “must” of the predictions of the passion by Christ Himself discloses a predetermined “must” in the self-giving of Christ. Hence, the election of grace is made apparent in the election of Christ to suffer. Barth further explains:

The free grace of God directed in Him towards the creature took on this form from the very first (from all eternity). According to Phil. 2.6f. it is obedience unto death, even unto the death of the cross, to which the Son of God predestines Himself when He empties Himself of His divine form of being. And this predestining is the content of the divine decree at the beginning of all things.

When God elected fellowship with humanity, He elected for Himself our rejection and made it His own. Calvin acknowledges: “The cross was accursed, not only in human opinion but by decree of God’s law [Deut. 21:23]. Hence, when Christ is hanged upon the cross, he makes himself subject to the curse . . . and bear[s] the curse due for sins.” Paul testifies frequently that Christ gave His own life as the Sacrifice for sins (Rom. 8:3, 2 Cor. 5:21, Gal. 3:13-14 and Col. 2:14-15). Often suffering on the cross is viewed from the perspective of

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56 Ibid., 121.
57 Ibid.
58 Jüngel entitles both of these as “God’s being-in-act” (Jüngel, The Doctrine of the Trinity: God’s Being Is in Becoming, 62).
59 CD II/2:122.
60 “He bore it [our rejection] and suffered it with all its most bitter consequences . . . He elected it as His own suffering” (CD II/2:164).
61 Inst., II.16.6. Can the decree of suffering of the cross coincide and coexist with the decree of Calvin’s doctrine of reprobation unless we interpret πάντων in the works of the cross limitedly?
62 Ibid.
the physical ordeal and torture. Yet the suffering of the cross by the Son of Man pertains even more so to the spiritual agony of God-forsakenness, as Jesus Christ bore “the inevitable wrath and perdition” due to human’s rebelliousness (Matt. 27:46; Mk. 15:34).

Accordingly, for Barth, “predestination means that from all eternity God has determined upon man’s acquittal at His own cost . . . because God has taken this suffering upon Himself.” Bauckham describes the suffering of the cross as “the furthest point to which God’s self-giving love in incarnation goes.” Therefore, “the cross must be seen not as merely an illustration of God’s self-identification with the godforsaken, rather the cross must be seen as God’s unique and concrete act of self-giving love for the godforsaken.” In so violent yet so eloquent a fashion, the cross at Golgotha announces that the scandal and the weakness of the cross is the greatest moment of manifesting the pursuit of the divine eleos in His suffering love.

This Pursuit of the Divine Eleos comes to humanity only in the form of forgiveness. Forgiveness takes place when Christ suffered on the cross what humanity ought to have suffered for its own sins. As a consequence divine eleos and election become visible at the cross, for divine eleos and election are “the hanging of the cross” as the Elect hung on the cross. Conversely, without the cross of Christ, the inner mystery of election could not and would not have been revealed. Luther maintains in his explanation of Heidelberg Disputation thesis 20:

The manifest and visible things of God are placed in opposition to the invisible, namely, his human nature, weakness, foolishness. The Apostle in 1

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63 CD II/2:166.
64 CD II/2:167-68. Balthasar offers a more dynamic depiction of Christ’s suffering in that Christ’s agony in Sheol is immeasurably greater than the punishment of hell for any and all other sinners because He had undergone this wrath on behalf of all sinners, suffering for each and every one of their sins (Oakes and Pitstick, “Balthasar, hell, and heresy: an exchange,” 25-32).
65 Bauckham, Jesus and the God of Israel, 267.
66 Ibid.
Cor. 1:25] calls them the weakness and folly of God. Because men misused the knowledge of God through works, God wished again to be recognized in suffering, and to condemn wisdom concerning invisible things by means of wisdom concerning visible things, so that those who did not honor [worship] God as manifested in his works should honor [worship] him as he is hidden in his suffering. As the Apostle says in 1 Cor. 1:21, “For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe.” Now it is not sufficient for anyone, and it does him no good to recognize God in his glory and majesty, unless he recognizes him in the humility and shame of the cross. Thus God destroys the wisdom of the wise, as Isa. [45:15] says, “Truly, thou art a God who hidest thyself.” . . . For this reason true theology and recognition of God are in the crucified Christ.67

McGrath explicates, “For Luther, the sole authentic locus of man’s knowledge of God is the cross of Christ, in which God is to be found revealed, and yet paradoxically hidden in the revelation . . . God is revealed in the passiones et crucem – and yet he is hidden in this very revelation.”68 In other words, divine election is the enactment of the divine eleos and love as they are unfolded in history through the cross of Christ.69 Election is expressly ascribed to the abundant eleos of God, and so is the salvation of the elect; regeneration and the living hope of the miserable and sinful subsist entirely upon divine mercy. Divine eleos and the election of Christ reach their summit at the cross. At the cross, mercy performs her most

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67 LW 31:52-53.
68 McGrath, Luther’s Theology of the Cross, 149.
69 This is exactly what the apostle Paul proclaimed in Romans 5, “But God demonstrates His own love for us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (verse 8, NKJV). Zachariah, at the circumcision of John the Baptist prophesied about Christ: “Through the tender mercy of our God (σπλάγχνα ἐλέους θεοῦ ἡμῶν), with which the Dayspring from on high has visited us” (Lk. 1:78, NKJV). Peter speaking of the cross and resurrection of Christ uttered this paean of praise: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy (τὸ πολὺ αὐτοῦ ἐλέος) has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead . . .” (1 Pet. 1:3, NKJV). God’s election is only found in Him—τὸ πολὺ αὐτοῦ ἐλέος; these words ascertain that it is not due to human merit. Luther contended in thesis 18 of the Heidelberg Disputation, “It is certain that man ought utterly to despair of himself so that he may become fit to receive the grace of God” (LW 31:21). All God’s goodness begins with His great mercy—“The LORD is good to all; he has compassion (tender mercies) on all he has made” (Ps. 145:9). Commenting on this abundant mercy of God, Spurgeon delivered a sermon entitled “A String of Pearls” in which, among his many devout and contemplative insights, he says that “No other attribute could have helped us had ‘mercy’ refused. As we are by nature, justice condemns us, holiness frowns upon us, power crushes us, truth confirms the threatening of the law, and wrath fulfills it. It is from the mercy of our God that all our hopes begin” (Exell, The Bible Illustrator, I – II Peter, 12).
noble deeds as the mercy of God and the misery of sin are fully united in the incarnated Son. When humanity was infected with an abundance of sin and wickedness, only the superoverflowing (ὑπερπερισσεύω, Rom. 5:20), unmerited mercy of God could cure humanity of all its natural vice and spiritual depravity, and make it worthy of His salvation.70

The Determination of the Cross

Predestination is not an act of God in which He uses humankind as a means to display His absolute majestic authority in their eternal election or damnation. Predestination in the Scripture surrounds the theme of the divine determination of the cross and its sanctification process.71 The cross is not just an invitation to the election of grace but even more so the pursuit of the divine eleos for the forgiveness of sins and a call to sanctification (Rom. 6:4, 10, 13, 17-19). The message of the cross makes no mistake that the electing God is a self-giving God who is mindful of His creation in man (Ps. 8:4, 5). The cross of Christ redirects our theological attention to the heart of God, who “intended and determined in Himself for man, for humanity, for each individual, and for all creation . . . He is the God who loves man. He is the God who in love makes man a companion.”72 The cross is God’s “attention”73 to

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70 Further to the discussions of corporate versus individual election in chapter 3, Campbell suggests that we need to read Romans 9-11 within the context of divine impartiality (Rom. 2). He further argues that Romans 9 needs to be read as a discussion of God’s relation to Israel, past and present, and as Paul’s attempt to understand divine activity in Israel’s history. That is why when we come to Romans 11, Paul begins by asking again whether God has possibly rejected his people. He repudiates this option by reminding his readers of the story of Elijah and the seven thousand faithful who had not bowed the knee to Baal. But from 11:7 onwards, it is historical Israel that resumes center stage, particularly in verses 25-27. It may be argued from this that Paul’s primary interest lies in the corporate people and their relation to God, including the Gentiles (Campbell, “Ernst Käsemann on Romans,” in Modern Interpretation of Romans, 178), and that theological reflections on individual election thus become secondary. Notably, Paul’s key emphasis is God’s overall plan of salvation, not individual destiny.

71 Some of the Reformers have directed our attention to the sanctifying purpose of predestination (see, e.g., Olevian, Romanos, 424-25, 440). Even Bucer’s discussion of election dwells on the theme of sanctification (Stephens, “The Church in Bucer’s commentaries on the Epistle to the Ephesians,” Martin Bucer, 48).

72 CD II/2:142. This does not mean that God does not take sins and godlessness seriously, or that He does not summon lawless men to render an account. Moltmann emphasizes that what it does mean is that Christ’s expiation for sins on the cross demonstrates: “1. How little unrighteous man can achieve his own righteousness, how there can be no new future for him without the acceptance of guilt and liberation from it, at least through
human sin and suffering. It continually stands between what the human race is (reprobates) and where it is heading (reprobation). It demands our “attention” to repent because of the Elect, Christ, who was rejected by God on the elected cross, the place where the chain of sins has been broken and the death of reprobation has been conquered. The cross has made it known that God is not mute, but the Spirit has spoken: “For God so loved the world!”

**Determination to Love the Whole World**

God spared not His own Son, but gave Him up on the cross as a ransom (1 Tim. 2:6, ἀντίλυτρον ὑπὲρ πάντων, cf. 4:10, ὃς ἐστὶν σωτήρ πάντων ἀνθρώπων, “who is the Savior of all people”; Tit. 2:11, Ἐπεφανή γὰρ ἡ χάρις τοῦ θεοῦ ἡ σωτηρίας πᾶσιν ἀνθρώποις, “For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people”). He has done so for us all unreservedly (Rom. 8:32, οὐκ ἔφεσατο ἀλλ’ ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν πάντων, “He spared not but for us all”), taking upon Himself the totality of Adam’s guilt (Rom. 5:15-21). These facts authenticate the claim that “God is as firmly committed to the life of this world as that cross was planted in the ground at Golgotha.”

Understood in the light of the cross, the movement of God toward this world in His election is a movement not just toward an abstraction or an academic concern for individuals, but toward the real world in its inseparableness and interrelatedness. This is the rationale good intentions by which he only denies himself; 2. that as the Christ of God, Jesus took the place of helpless man as his representative and in so doing made it possible for man to enter into communion before God in which he otherwise could not stand and survive; 3. that in the death of Christ God himself has acted in favor of this man” (Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, 183).


Ibid., 36, 46. Balthasar’s exposition of 2 Corinthians 5:14, “One has died for all; therefore all have died,” points to the fact that “the universality of the second affirmation cannot be detached from the singularity of the first.” See Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale: The Mystery of Easter* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2000), 53. Universality must not be confused with universalism; for the universality of the second affirmation refers to the scope of the gospel, while universalism refers to the ultimate salvation of all. While universality is a statement of hope for all, it is not an assertion of actual salvation for all.
behind Barth’s definition of the doctrine of election as the sum of the gospel. It is a gospel as seen and comprehended from the event and content of the cross. Barth forcefully depicts the depth and wonder of this gospel-intention as applied to the reprobates, not of the others but of one’s inner wretched self through the lifting up of the cross:

He decrees the rejection of the evil-doer, but in predestinating Himself to union with the Son of Man in His Son He decrees that this rejection should be lifted from man and laid upon Himself. In spite of man’s unworthiness in himself, He wills and affirms and loves man, yet in so doing He does not will the continuance of man in his unworthiness. He wills rather that man should be exalted, and that (by the power of His grace) he should have a share in His own worthiness. He does not will the death of the sinner, but rather that he should be converted and live. The realization of this foreordination of man is, of course, willed in such a way as to make man himself fulfill all the history which is the content of the divine will for him. From his supposed innocence he must be plunged into the depths of sin and misery, and from these depths he must be lifted up again to the heights of real innocence, righteousness and blessedness.

The depth and height, length and width of the gospel are displayed at the cross. Torrance asserts, “It is on the cross that at last all the sin of humanity is finally laid upon him.” He also claims, “At the cross, in particular, we see that all are both elected and damned in Christ.” The invitation of the cross is “whoever” (Jn. 3:16), “all” (Acts 17:30-31; 1 Tim. 2:6; 4:10; Tit. 2:11) and “come” (Rev. 22:17)—an unlimited open invitation, in which “there is no distinction’ (Rom. 3:22). However, this open invitation must entail the movement of “whoever” in coming by faith to the cross.

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76 CD II/2:1.
77 John 12:32: “And I, when I am lifted up (hupsothō) from the earth, will draw all people to myself.” Also, cf. John 3:14-15.
78 CD II/2:192.
79 Balthasar described this as the cosmic dimensions of the cross (Balthasar, Mysterium Paschale, 58).
82 “Because death is unaware of all these distinctions. So the crucified one does not recognize these distinctions either” (Moltmann, The Crucified God, 194).
Amidst the complexity of the traditional doctrine of re probation we find an important assumption. If Christ’s atonement is provided for all mankind, and yet a greater part of humanity is not saved, then we must systematically deduce one of two options: a) God is not sovereign, or b) the necessity of double predestination—God only elected some and willed the rest of humankind to be condemned. For the Calvinists, to deny both election and reprobation means that people are capable of rejecting God’s love and, in so doing, negate His power and sovereignty, and also violently twist His eternal plan.83

However, one needs to recognize that the sovereignty of God requires no sheltered isolation from all the other attributes of the Triune God. God’s omnipotence, for instance, does not mean that God can do anything with power; rather, it means that He can do with power anything that His character and attributes would allow Him to perform.84 Correspondingly, the mystery of His sovereignty is not so much about the secret motive of His unchangeable decree, but more so about the inconceivable mercy (1 Cor. 2:9) of His “unforced rhythm of grace”85 and His freedom in the pursuit of the divine eleos. Barth fittingly expounds the mystery of divine mercy:

This is undoubtedly the mystery of the divine mercy. God acted in this way because He grieved over His people, because He did not will to abandon the world in its unreconciled state and therefore on the way which leads to destruction, because he willed to show to it an unmerited faithfulness as the Creator, because in His own inconceivable way He loved it. But in this respect it is as well to be clear that the mystery of His mercy is also the mystery of His righteousness. He did not take the unreconciled state of the world lightly, but in all seriousness.86

83 *Inst.*, III.24.15.
86 *CD*, IV.1.59, 230. Many Rabbinic sources convey that God’s mercy is greater than His justice. Sanders explains: “The theme of mercy to the righteous is also worked out elaborately in the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Psalms of Solomon. . . . The themes of mercy and retribution or justice are not in competition, but serve different functions. . . . God is not capricious. He will neither punish for obedience nor reward transgression. The theme
Undisputedly, Christ’s atonement on the cross demonstrates that God takes the unreconciled state of the fallen race in all seriousness.\textsuperscript{87} His seriousness states sufficiently the reason why God sovereignly chose to pursue the fallen human race with His divine \textit{eleos} through the predestination of the cross. Hence, the doctrine of predestination should rightfully be acclaimed as the predestination of Christ’s atonement on the cross rather than the predestination to salvation and damnation, as was prescribed in Calvin’s doctrine of double predestination.\textsuperscript{88}

Furthermore, at the cross of Christ both limited atonement and universalism need to surrender their arguments.\textsuperscript{89} Chiarot attests:

The . . . error which both limited atonement and universalism entail is a failure to come to grips with the irrationality of evil and sin, and thus, of reprobation. For universalism, if Christ died for all men, all must be saved. For advocates of limited atonement, if some are not saved, then Christ must not have died for them. Both parties are guilty of “systematizing the illogical.”\textsuperscript{90}

The issue in question lies not in the debate between limited versus unlimited atonement, and there is even less a concern about universal redemption. Rather the problem has its foundation on at least two fronts. The first is in Calvin’s advocacy of an efficacy of the atonement that is determined by election, meaning Christ’s atonement is simply the \textit{means} by which salvation is accomplished for the elect. The second is in Calvin affirming a reprobation that is based on God’s eternal decree, which implies that the reprobates were

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\textsuperscript{87} This is also suggested by Draper’s “frontier” reading, which takes the context of the “indigenous” people seriously (Draper, “A “Frontier” Reading of Romans,” 60). So we must read Paul’s view of election and predestination in Romans 9 by taking into account a context where God takes the human dilemma seriously as seen through the election of the Cross of Christ.

\textsuperscript{88} Cf. page 254-55 regarding Scriptural usage of “predestination”.

\textsuperscript{89} Torrance, \textit{Atonement}, 187-88 (cf. Chiarot, \textit{The Unassumed}, 216).

\textsuperscript{90} Chiarot, \textit{The Unassumed}, 217.
barred from the effect of atonement right from the start. The correlating questions that one must seriously ponder are: Was God absolutely bound by His decree or was His decree bound by the manifestation of His nature and attributes? Were there instances where God relented from His decree? What do God’s freedom and mercy look like in the context of the reprobates, whether in the Old or New Testament?

The key concern that challenges the relationship between atonement and election is the question of which regulates which, or which is the cause and which is the effect? Another approach to this issue is to probe whether the efficacy of atonement ascertains or subserves election? In other words, did Christ’s atonement determine the extent of the election or did the elect determine the extent of His atonement? Essentially, all these questions surround the pivotal question of whether God foreordained the atonement of Christ for sinners or predestined the election of the saints before the beginning of time? This is a fundamental question that needs to be discussed further. Suffice it to say, a thorough consideration of the theological issues surrounding predestination must begin by examining the actual texts that address the foreknowledge of God and His predestination. For example in Acts 2:23, the apostle Peter preaches about foreknowledge in the suffering of the man Jesus, and thus in the atonement. Also, in Acts 4:28 the prayer of the disciples touches upon the predestination of the cross and suffering of Christ in His atonement. Likewise in

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91 This is not to dismiss the sovereignty of God in His decree; rather it is to question whether a) His decree is simply an outflow of His character, or b) His character is an outflow of His decree, or even a third option c) His character is His decree and vice-versa. For the third option, I answer that His character “IS”, and is not decreed or determined. For example, God’s Triuneess (attribute and nature) cannot be His decree. His Trinity “IS”; it is not decreed or determined. His holiness “IS”; it is not decreed. However, His decree is a reflection of His holiness. In other words, God “IS,” therefore He decrees; not He decrees, therefore He “IS.” This leads us to conclude that the first option is more accurate.

92 2 Timothy 1:9-10.

93 Acts 2:2: “This man was handed over to you by God’s set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross.”

94 Acts 4:28: “They did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen.”
Romans 11:5 Paul speaks of the election of grace. What does this grace refer to? It relates to the grace of the atonement of Christ according to Romans 3:24, 25. Therefore it should not be taken lightly that the main emphasis of predestination is rightfully placed on the atonement of Christ Jesus and His suffering. The emphasis of predestination is on the approach that God compacted with Himself, how (by the atonement of Christ) He willed something to become of each man. But Calvin’s emphasis was on what (“eternal life is foreordained for some, eternal damnation for others”) God willed to become of each individual, rather than the way of salvation.

Calvin’s emphasis was on the fate rather than the means: “We call predestination God’s eternal decree, by which he compacted with himself what he willed to become of each man. For all are not created in equal condition; rather, eternal life is foreordained for some, eternal damnation for others.” The question might be raised whether individual destiny (such that of Judas, Herod, Pilate, etc., who themselves were caught up in being instruments “predestined” for the death of Christ) can be separated from Christ’s predestined atonement? The answer goes back to the emphasis of predestination: “how” He willed, not “what destiny” He willed. Each of these individuals had the chance to repent of their decisions and receive forgiveness from Christ’s atonement (how), just as Peter did after he vehemently denied Christ three times, which denial was also foretold. The destines of the aforementioned individuals and their acts of reprobation (what) were their own personal responsibility. One of the biblical implications of predestination is that we are called to a

95 Rom. 11:5: “Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace” (KJV, ASV). Rom. 3: 24, 25: “and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood—to be received by faith. He did this to demonstrate his righteousness, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished.”
96 Inst., III.21.5.
ready acceptance of personal responsibility. Jesus says, “No one takes it from me, but I lay it
down of my own accord” (Jn. 10:18). Likewise, when Judas confessed “I have sinned in that
I have betrayed innocent blood” (Matt. 27:4), he fully accepted personal responsibility in the
betrayal. Furthermore, the Scriptures teach that all humanity will give an account on the day
of judgment for their own conduct (Rom. 14:12; 2 Cor. 5:10), not for being predestined.

The determination to love the whole world is clearly expressed in John 3:16, “For
God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son.” Rather than condemnation,
redemption offered to the world is the principal purpose of the election of the Son. Because
He is the Word Incarnate (Logos incarnatus), He is the Mediator wholly within the flesh
(totus intra carnem), and thus “God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the
world, but to save the world through Him” (Jn. 3:17). Furthermore, on the cross Jesus
prayed, “Father forgive them for they do not know what they are doing” (Lk. 23:34). The
Trinitarian God loves the world and with divine good pleasure determined (Rom. 3:25,
προέθετο, cf. Eph. 1:9) to give His Son for the world of sinful humanity, both the elect and
the non-elect, who are worthy only of divine reprobation. When Jesus prayed that prayer of
forgiveness on the cross, that prayer included all His enemies, the anti-elect and the mali-
elect, who were offenders unworthy of the divine election. Nevertheless, on the cross, the

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97 CD IV/1:181.
98 It was Kaminsky who introduced the presupposed category of the anti-elect into the discussion of the Israelette idea of election. “The anti-elect are those groups who are deemed to be enemies of God and whom Israel is commanded to annihilate” (Kaminski, “Did Election Imply?” 398-402). However, in the four Gospels, when Jesus is confronted by the so-called elite of the elect—the chief priest, the Pharisees, the elders and the teachers of the law—Christ addresses them as enemies of the cross (cf. Phil. 3:18), even though they are not outside the elect nation of Israel but ironically are within it. Christ calls them wicked servants (Lk. 19:22, 27), evil tenants (Matt. 21:41), hypocrites and whitewashed tombs (Matt. 23:27). Henceforth, another category within the concept of election comes to light; the “wicked-elect” or the “mali-elect” must be brought into the discussion in the topic of election and reprobation. This is precisely what Paul points out in Romans 9, arguing that the hardened vessels of wrath are not only those from the non-elect or the anti-elect; rather, they could easily be those who pride themselves on being the elite-elect, but who are actually the “mali-elect” in God’s economy of the election of grace, because they scorn the unmerited mercy of God.
Trinitarian election *pro nobis* was fulfilled in its reconciliatory work of Christ *ad extra* for the sake of all humanity, as it is unreservedly written and decreed. It is on the cross that the determination of grace to reach the reprobate and the perishable race reveals the devoted nature of God’s *eleos*. Beyond expectation, Isaiah further reveals that the ultimate pursuit of divine *eleos* culminates in God calling His priests and “Levites” from among the non-elect Gentiles and extending this “royal priesthood” beyond previous covenantal boundaries to minister for Him in the holy things of God (Isa. 66:20-21).

**Determination of Mercy for the Reprobate**

The pursuit of the divine *eleos* is a determination, not for the righteous, but for the reprobate. Paul in Romans 5 uses three particular descriptions to depict the reprobate, such as we were: 100 “ungodly” (ἀσεβῶν, impious, v. 6), “sinners” (ἀμαρτωλῶν, wicked, heathen, tax-collectors, v. 8), and “enemies” (ἐχθροὶ, hateful, hostile, v. 10). For each particular description, the apostle declares that Christ died for us, reconciled us to God and delivered us from the wrath to come (v.9 and 1 Thess. 1:10). The greatness of the pursuing love and mercy of God as it reaches out to the undeserving is thus confirmed. These three verses state clearly that divine *eleos* and God’s reasons for loving those who are legally condemned are only found in Him and Him alone.

Over and again, Jesus confronts the Pharisees and the scribes in stating the purpose of His earthly mission, “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. But go and learn what this means: ‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice.’” For I have not come to call the righteous,

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99 The disputation does not centers primarily on people being condemned, which is considered right because God owes no one anything. By adopting such a premise, the traditional Reformed double predestination finds its own justified explanation. Rather, the main emphasis of the disputation is whether Christ’s ransom is provided for all or not. The Scriptures says it is (1 Tim. 2:6; 4:10).
100 1 Cor. 6:9-11.
but sinners” (Matt. 9:12, 13; Lk. 15:32; cf. “The Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector,” Lk. 18:9-14 and the calling of Zacchaeus, the tax collector in Lk. 19:1-10). The tax collectors were utterly despised and detested by the Jewish populace under the Roman rule, especially by the religious leaders such as the Pharisees and the teachers of the law. They classified the tax collectors along with harlots, evildoers and thieves—or extortioners—(Matt. 21:31, 32; Lk. 18:11) as “sinners” (Matt. 9:10; 11:19; Mk. 2:15; Lk. 7:34; 15:2), and even relished their damnation. These attitudes and treatments are reflected in the rabbinic writings.\(^{101}\) According to some Rabbinic teaching there was no hope of repentance for a tax collector.\(^{102}\) In fact the tax collectors were considered to be more unclean than the thieves: “If tax gatherers entered a house [all that is within it] becomes unclean . . . If thieves entered a house, only that part is unclean that was trodden by the feet of the thieves.” – *Tohoroth* 7:6.\(^{103}\)

The feeling of Jesus toward the tax collectors stood in total contrast to that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law. They saw these tax collectors as reprobates and yet these tax collectors and sinners mattered to Him. Jesus’ compassion for the reprobates is clearly demonstrated through the three parables in Luke 15: *The Parable of the Lost Sheep, The Parable of the Lost Coin* and *The Parable of the Lost Son.* The Pharisees in New Testament times divided people into two classes: the righteous and the sinners. They would have nothing to do with the “sinners”; that is why they accused Jesus of receiving sinners and eating with the tax collectors (Lk. 15:1-2). In response to their accusation, Jesus told these three parables to show the scope of the love of God the Father, that He has no pleasure in the


\(^{102}\) Ibid., 39.

\(^{103}\) Ibid., 50.
death of sinners\textsuperscript{104} but great pleasure in seeking and pursuing their return and repentance, rejoicing in the full measure of His mercy.\textsuperscript{105}

In His earthly ministry, Jesus in fact seems to attract those who are called reprobates by the Pharisees and the teachers of the Law (Matt. 9:10, 11; Lk. 5:29, 30; 15:1, 2). Furthermore, John declares that Jesus did not come to condemn anyone (Jn. 3:17), but to offer every reprobate repentance and salvation from the consequences of reprobation. Christ would reject none, not even the worst of sinners, but came to seek and save the lost. In fact, “there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent” (Lk. 15:7, cf. vv. 10, 23, 24, 32). Why would there be rejoicing and celebration? What does this great rejoicing suggest? This determination of mercy for the outcast\textsuperscript{106} and the reprobate is not a new revelation, for Jesus’ assertion makes reference to the prophetic proclamations in the Old Testament: “I will search for the lost and bring back the strays” (Ezek. 34:16) and “For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice” (Hos. 6:6, cf. Matt. 9:13). The elect Israel was rigorous with the rituals of sacrifice but had failed to be merciful to the outcast and the non-elect, because she had forsaken the truth and knowledge of God (6:6b; cf. 4:1, 2; Jer. 22:16).

Not only are the reprobates the objects of divine \textit{eleos}, but they were not predestined with an absolute decree to be eternally condemned, and/or to be excluded from grace, as traditional Calvinism\textsuperscript{107} or even Luther\textsuperscript{108} would claim.\textsuperscript{109} Contrary to Calvin’s ideas

\textsuperscript{104} It is also an Old Testament claim, as in Ezek. 18:23.
\textsuperscript{105} Questions do arise concerning how to harmonize these three parables with Matt. 18:17 and Paul’s instruction in 1 Cor. 5:9-13. The parables in Lk. 15 deal with those who are wayward and in need of God’s love and mercy, while Matt. 18:17 and 1 Cor. 5:9 speak against habitual offenders who have heard of the truth yet choose to continue in living their promiscuous lifestyle.
\textsuperscript{106} Tax collectors and publicans.
\textsuperscript{107} As aforementioned, Calvin defines predestination as “God’s eternal decrees, by which he compacted with himself what he willed to become of each man . . . eternal life is foreordained for some, eternal damnation for others” (\textit{Inst.}, III.21.5). There is a difference between decreeing individuals as reprobate for eternal
regarding the doctrine of reprobation, where God is understood to have ordained from eternity those upon whom He wills to vent His wrath in their eternal death,\textsuperscript{110} scriptural sources need to be sought in order to attain an impartial and accurate understanding of the proper concept of reprobation.

In the Old Testament, the basic Hebrew word that can be translated as reprobate\textsuperscript{111} is the word מְאַסְתָּ which reflects the idea of “rejection,” often in the religious context of God rejecting or being rejected.\textsuperscript{112} The seventy-six usages of this verb reveal that men despise, מַעֲשֵׂה, the Lord who is among them (Num. 11:20) and thus merit God’s rejecting, מָאַסְתָּ, them (Hos. 4:6).\textsuperscript{113} The meaning and theological usage of מְאַסְתָּ have covenantal overtones when the term appears in contrast to verbs meaning “choose.”\textsuperscript{114} For example, Lev. 26:14-45 speaks both of Israel rejecting their God and of being rejected by God in the context of God’s covenant with them. Wagner asserts, “God’s rejection of his people (2 K. 17:20; cf. already Hos. 4:6, further 1 S. 15:23, 26; 16:1) was prompted by Israelites’ own contempt for and rejection of all God’s statues and covenantal agreements (2 K. 17:15).”\textsuperscript{115} In the context of the covenant, Merrill further observes:

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\textsuperscript{110} Luther equates the vessels of wrath in Romans 9:22 with the reprobate for whom God “made eternal perdition” (\textit{LW} 25:84).

\textsuperscript{111} Augustine however does not go that far. Rather, he maintains that God has not determined to save them from what their reprobation justly merited (Augustine, \textit{City of God}, XXI,12; \textit{The Enchiridion}, 27). On the other hand, Aquinas says that God by providence simply permits some to fall into sin and imposes the punishment of damnation on account of that sin (\textit{ST} I, 23, 5).

\textsuperscript{112} Ps. 15:4, “in whose eyes a \textit{reprobate} is despised, but who honors those who fear the LORD; who swears to his own hurt and does not change” (RSV). Jer. 6:30, “Reprobate silver shall [men] call them, because the LORD hath rejected them” (KJV).

\textsuperscript{113} David J. A. Clines, \textit{DCH} (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 5:120.


\textsuperscript{115} Merrill, “\textit{NIDOTTE},” 2:833.
When Israel is in dispersion, Yahweh says he will not ultimately reject them, thereby breaking the covenant, but will restore them (Lev. 16:44). He did reject them temporarily, however, allowing them to go into captivity (2 Kgs 17:20; cf. Hos 9:17), a judgment he promised also to unrepentant Judah (2 Kgs 23:27). This came as no surprise, for God had repeatedly taken measures of discipline described as rejection (Ps 78:59).\(^{116}\)

Four principles are clear in the Old Testament usage of the term **ewise**, implying reprobation or rejection.

a) It is used in the context of the covenant (2 Ki. 17:15; Jer. 7:21-29; 14:19-21).

b) Individual salvation is not guaranteed solely by being part of the covenantal community. Judah (or its kings at least) appeared to have suffered rejection despite the covenantal promises (Ps. 89:38, 39; cf. vv. 34-37).\(^{117}\)

c) Any individual may reject God’s calling by rejecting God’s Word (2 Ki. 17:15).

d) Reprobation is the result of the depraved actions of humanity that pierce the heart of God (Jer. 4:18), and it is not predetermined in God’s decree. Thus, when Jeremiah says, “they are called the rejected silver” (6:30), he makes reference to a people who have been tried and found to be like the dross of silver (Ezek. 22:18), which is fit only to be thrown away. Thus the only anticipation of rejection or reprobation is in the prophetic oracle of judgment. Wagner concludes: “Thus **ewise** describes God’s reactive judgment, either anticipated in the prophetic oracle of judgment or justified in the light of the actual historical catastrophe itself.”\(^{118}\) In spite of Israel’s faithlessness, God’s mercy is still relentless in its pursuit (Jer. 3:12, 14).

\(^{116}\) Merrill, “**ewise**,” *NIDOTTE*, 2:833.

\(^{117}\) Ibid.

\(^{118}\) Wagner, “**ewise**,” *TDOT*, VIII:55.
However, in the New Testament, the Greek word used to express *reprobate* is ἀδόκιμος. The word ἀδόκιμος simply means “not standing the test” and “worthless.” These nuances are retained in only eight New Testament occurrences: Rom. 1:28; 1 Cor. 9:27; 2 Cor. 13:5, 6, 7; 2 Tim. 3:8; Tit. 1:16 and Heb. 6:8. In the situations described in the New Testament, human existence stands under divine testing in which it must prove itself, with this testing culminating in judgment (1 Cor. 3:13). This aspect of testing has its origin in the Old Testament. One clear example of this usage as understood by the Hellenistic Jewish tradition is found in Jer. 14:19, where the Septuagint applies the terms δοκιμάζων (ἐαυτός, Jer. 11:20) and ἀποδοκιμάζων (ἐαυτός, Jer. 14:19, cf. 2 Ki. 17:20) within the context of Israel’s judgment. God’s people had been found guilty and the final judgment was that God had rejected and set aside that generation for damnation. The prophet Jeremiah wrestles passionately with God for the removal of God’s rejection following the divine testing: “Have you rejected Judah completely? Do you despise Zion? Why have you afflicted us so that we cannot be healed?” (14:19). As it follows, Jeremiah is later assured that only if creation itself was annihilated would God reject His people forever (31:37).

The first occurrence of the word reprobate, ἀδόκιμος, is found in Romans 1:28:

“Furthermore, just as they did not think it worthwhile (ἐδοκίμασαν from δόκιμος) to retain the knowledge of God, so God gave them over to a depraved mind (ἀδόκιμον νοῦν).” Calvin comments: “As they chose (ἐδοκίμασαν) not to continue in the knowledge of God, which alone guides our minds to true wisdom, the Lord gave them a perverted mind (ἀδόκιμον

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122 “Their work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each person’s work.”
νο', which can choose nothing that is right.”\textsuperscript{124} Furthermore, in his commentary on the word \textit{ἀδόκιμος} in 2 Cor. 13:5, Calvin reckons them as “men unsound, \textit{not able to bear the test}, not genuine as Christians (emphasis added).”\textsuperscript{125} 2 Tim. 3:8 refers to \textit{ἀδόκιμος} as “latter-day heretics robbed by their corrupt intelligence of the capacity for sound judgment in anything concerning the faith and moral values.”\textsuperscript{126} In Titus 1:16, the apostle Paul describes the Judaizers, who pretend to have a higher spirituality; yet the apostle sees through their spiritual pretense and exposes them as unfit, \textit{ἀδόκιμος}, for any good work. The nuance of the word \textit{ἀδόκιμος} as applied in 1 Cor. 9:27 is more precise; the apostle Paul alludes to athletic competitions, “where the judge, after an examination, ‘eliminated’ certain contestants who were ‘not acceptable,’ or in the case of defeat, refused to award them a prize.”\textsuperscript{127}

It is notable that all eight occurrences of \textit{ἀδόκιμος} in the New Testament are used by the apostle Paul in describing those who are rejected as reprobates, those who have tasted God’s goodness\textsuperscript{128} and been tested by the knowledge of God and found to be unfit for the kingdom. Just as in the Old Testament, God warns that if His chosen people reject His Law and end up serving other gods, they will face the wrath of His reprobation (Deut. 31:16-21). In history, the elect people of God have become the reprobate people,\textsuperscript{129} proving true to God’s warning in the New Testament, “Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test (δοκιμάζετε) yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you—unless, of course, you fail the test (ἀδόκιμοι)” (2 Cor. 13:5). Markedly, when Jesus speaks about His suffering on the cross in Lk. 20:17, He quotes Ps. 118:22, “The stone the builders rejected

\textsuperscript{124}Calvin, \textit{Romans}, 79 (Greek words added for emphasis).
\textsuperscript{125}Ibid., 80, note 1.
\textsuperscript{126}Spicq, “\textit{δόκιμος},” \textit{TLNT}, 1:361.
\textsuperscript{127}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{128}Heb. 6:4, 5.
\textsuperscript{129}Boersma, \textit{Hospitality}, 81.
(ἀποδοκимάζω) has become the capstone.” Jesus identifies Himself with the reprobate through the rejection of the “elite-elect”: the elders, the chief priest and the scribes, and yet this “Reprobate” was elected by God and held in honor (θεῷ ἐκλεκτὸν ἐντιμον, 1 Pet. 2:4) as the chief of the community of the elect.

The concept of massa damnata as developed by Augustine states that because of the original sin of Adam and Eve, all humanity deserves condemnation from God—a grave violation that necessitates “reprobation.” Yet Augustine speaks of God foreknowing and permitting the original sin of the fall, and his predestination does not include reprobation (he does not use this expression) in the sense that God from all eternity actively chooses to condemn or to show mercy towards certain individuals. However, as mentioned above, his definition of predestination has a threatening corollary insofar as the divine judgment leaves the mass of humanity in perdition. Therefore Augustine’s concept can be classified as “negative reprobation,” which implies that God allows the mass to remain in its fallen state, whereas positive reprobation implies that God destines the mass to eternal damnation. This theological concept drives Augustine to explain scriptural passages pertaining God’s election, such as Romans 9:13, in the following way:

Thus, both the twins were “by nature children of wrath,” not because of any works of their own, but because they were both bound in the fetters of damnation originally forged by Adam. But He who said, “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy,” loved Jacob in unmerited mercy, yet hated Esau with merited justice. Since this judgment [of wrath] was due them both, the former learned from what happened to the other that the fact that he had not, with equal merit, incurred the same penalty gave him no ground to boast of his

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131 There are reprobates who fail the test and reprobates who are considered “sinners”. Regardless, they are still objects of God’s grace and God’s pursuing eleos.
132 Mk. 8:31; Lk. 9:22, 17:25.
133 Ad Simplicianum, 16; Enchiridion, VIII.27; City of God, XXI.12; On Nature and Grace, 5.5, 25.
134 City of God, XIV.11. Cf. DDP, XIV.35.
136 This distinction is made in the medieval era by many theologians, particularly Aquinas (ST, I, 23, 3).
own distinctive merits—but, instead, that he should glory in the abundance of
divine grace, because “it is not a question of him who wills nor of him who
runs, but of God’s showing mercy.”

According to Augustine, Esau’s rejection is “negative reprobation” and is justly deserved
because he belongs to the massa damnata. Yet scripturally, Esau’s “rejection” is more than
that of the massa damnata of Augustine. As previously discussed, Esau not being chosen or
being “hated” has to do more with his “demerits” and covenantal responsibility than just
individual salvation. Thus, Paul is not necessarily discussing in this text the election of Jacob
versus the reprobation of Esau. What Paul is stressing primarily is the mercy of God in His
purpose of election. Furthermore, in the discussion of “reprobation” as applied to the Jews
and the Gentiles, Augustine differentiates the “reprobation of rejection” only after the Jews
had been tested but were found “lacking,” and the letting go or the “negative reprobation”
was applicable to the Gentiles. The basic question is: does God decide to condemn the
mass of humanity with or without looking at their demerits? Here we see that Augustine
wants to hold separate applications: a biblical reprobation for the Jews and a “rational”
reprobation for the Gentiles. Likewise, contrary to Calvin’s ideas about the doctrine of
reprobation, where God is said to have ordained from eternity those upon whom He wills to
vent His wrath, a deeper analysis of the word reprobate in both Old and New Testaments
provides us with a very different concept or model of reprobation. The primary meaning of
reprobation, as derived from the theological usage and within its contextual settings, has
strong covenantal overtones and emphasizes divine testing, where reprobation is the ultimate
result of the depraved actions of humanity and not a predetermination of individuals for
reprobation by God’s eternal decree.

137 Enchiridion, XXV.98.
138 DDP, XIV.35.
Thus scripturally, the terminology and concept of reprobation never imply the fate that is the outcome of divine preordination; rather, reprobation is the result of the depraved actions of humans (Rom. 1:18-20, 2:6-11) who have been found worthless (Rom. 3:12), unfit for the elected community. As such, the discrepancy between scriptural writers’ usage and the understanding of Calvinism is apparent. In Calvin’s reasoning, there can be no election without its opposite—reprobation; and he contends that if God really wished all men to be saved, then all men would be saved. But most men are not saved. Therefore, the conclusion must be that God does not wish all men to be saved. This reasoning falls into a fallacy of logical reductionism, as it assumes that the will of God operates linearly and has but one single facet. In the final analysis, we need to distinguish between human empirical reasoning and the divine scriptural sapientia in our theological discourses. Not only was the destiny of the reprobates not absolutely ordained by God, but the scriptural concept of reprobation teaches that the reprobates are the objects of His mercy unto repentance (Lk. 5:32) and are offered grace through the decree of the suffering of Christ on the cross (Lk. 22:22; Rom. 3:21, 25; 5:15, 20; 11:5). Did not Christ even number Judas among the “chosen” disciples, although he “is a devil” (Jn. 6:70)? Yet Christ “bore with great patience” (Rom. 9:22), giving him the chance to be exposed to His grace and truth.

139 If Calvin does not base his discussion on the biblical usage of these specific terms, then his conclusions present a doctrine that is built solely on human supposition.

140 Calvin maintains: “election itself could not stand except as set over against reprobation” (Inst., III.23.1). Calvin reasons further, “But experience teaches that God wills the repentance of those whom he invites to himself, in such a way that he does not touch the hearts of all” (ibid., 24.15, emphasis added). Elsewhere he writes, “it seemed somewhat absurd to pour out prayers to God for an hopeless class of men” (ibid., 16, emphasis added). Even Augustine commits a similar fallacy in ignoring the biblical usage of “predestine”: In the Enchiridion, Augustine writes, “As the Supreme Good, he made good use of evil deeds, for the damnation of those whom He has justly predestined to punishment, and for the salvation of those whom He has mercifully predestined to grace” (26.100). This vague reference to “double predestination” recurs in his Letters 204.2 to Dulcitus: “seeing that God, by a hidden, though just, arrangement has predestined some of them to the ultimate penalty” (Rist, Augustine, 269).

141 Inst., III.24.14, 17; cf. also 21.5; 22.11.

142 Calvin reads the election of Judas only in terms of the apostolic office, not salvation: “In elsewhere numbering Judas among the elect, though he was a devil (John 6:70), he refers only to the apostolical office,
Determination for the Predestination of the Cross

The major writings of Augustine\textsuperscript{143} had extensive influence on Calvin in his preoccupation with this doctrine. Subsequently, Calvin held the view that God has eternally decreed the ultimate destiny of each individual, whether to eternal life (election) or eternal damnation (reprobation). As aforementioned, Calvin amplifies his definition of predestination in the following way:

We call predestination God’s eternal decree, by which he decided with himself what he willed to become of each man. For not all are created equal condition; rather, eternal life is foreordained for some, eternal damnation for others. Therefore, as any man has been created to one or the other of these ends, we speak of him as predestined to life or to death.\textsuperscript{144}

Although Aquinas does not follow Augustine’s views on the “double” judgment of God, his position on predestination still has to do with human beings attaining salvation. Based on His own goodness,\textsuperscript{145} “God from all eternity prepared by predestination” and conceived the idea of ordering some towards salvation.\textsuperscript{146} Vermigli, one of the lesser-known Reformers, states that these definitions do not comprehend the whole matter. Thus he formulates a more accurate, fuller scriptural definition of predestination:

Predestination is the most wise purpose of God by which he has from eternity constantly decreed to call all those whom he has loved in Christ to the adoption of his children, to justification by faith, and at last to glory through good works, that they may be made like the image of the Son of God, and that in them may be declared the glory and mercy of the creator.\textsuperscript{147}

\textsuperscript{143} No fewer than thirty-two times does Calvin mention and/or quote from Augustine’s writings on the subject of predestination in his \textit{Institutes} III.21-24.

\textsuperscript{144} \textit{Inst.}, III.21.5.

\textsuperscript{145} Cf. \textit{ST} I, 6, 1 & 4; I, 23, 5.

\textsuperscript{146} \textit{ST} I, 23, 2.3. For further study of Aquinas’ clarification of predestination and its definition, cf. Aquinas, \textit{Romans}, 1:4; §§43-44. Cf. §51.

\textsuperscript{147} “I think that this definition comprehends all things relating to the nature of predestination, and all its parts may be proved by Holy Scripture” (Vermigli, \textit{Predestination and Justification}, 19).
A consideration of the theological issues surrounding predestination needs to take into account the actual texts that address the foreknowledge of God and His predestination. The theological discourses of writers such as Augustine, Aquinas, Luther, and Calvin, as well as most of the writers from the patristic time through the medieval era and the (post-) Reformed periods, extensively and rigorously revolve around the fate of the individuals. These periods appear to overlook the scriptural texts that offer significant insights beyond the foreknowledge of the fate of the individual. The essential truths regarding foreknowledge in Scripture dwell on the suffering of the man Jesus on the cross (Acts 2:23),\(^{148}\) the purpose of being conformed to the likeness of Jesus (Rom. 8:29),\(^{149}\) the unique relationship God has with Israel (Rom. 11:2),\(^{150}\) the means of sanctification through the cross (1 Pet. 1:2),\(^{151}\) and the choosing of Christ to shed blood and suffer death on the cross (vv. 19 & 21) for our faith and hope (1 Pet. 1:20).\(^{152}\) Likewise, the texts on the topic of predestination do not draw attention to the fate of the individual. Rather, the broad spectrum centrally points to the cross and the suffering of Christ in His atonement (Acts 4:28),\(^{153}\) the purpose of conforming to the likeness of Jesus in His humility and obedience unto death on the cross\(^ {154}\) and the assurance of salvation (Rom. 8:29, 30).\(^ {155}\) They also point to the final glory in Christ’s salvation

\(^ {148}\) Acts 2:23: “This man was handed over to you by God’s set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross.”

\(^ {149}\) Rom. 8:29: “For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.”

\(^ {150}\) Rom. 11:2: “God did not reject his people, whom he foreknew.”

\(^ {151}\) 1 Pet. 1:2: “who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by his blood.”

\(^ {152}\) 1 Pet. 1:20: “He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake.”

\(^ {153}\) Acts 4:28: “They did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen.”

\(^ {154}\) “Conforming to the likeness of Jesus” often refers to the way of the cross, which Jesus took for our salvation (Phil. 2:5-8; 3:10).

\(^ {155}\) Rom. 8:29, 30: “For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.”
through the cross (1 Cor. 2:7, 8),\textsuperscript{156} the process and the privilege of adoption as His sons through the redemption of His blood shed on the cross (Eph. 1:5, 7),\textsuperscript{157} and the praise of His glory (Eph. 1:11,12)\textsuperscript{158} as the Lamb who was slain on the cross (Rev. 5:6, 12).

For many decades, the major discussions of predestination, particularly the classical Reformed teaching, appear to have overlooked the embedded richness of the theological implications of the foreknowledge and predestination of God through the cross. They have instead fixated on the notion of the individual fate in salvation or reprobation. Indeed, the Scripture records specific instances, in the strictest sense, when God appointed and elected individuals to their particular roles throughout the history of His redemption. He raised up others as well, like Pharaoh, for the very purpose that God might display His power and that the name of God might be proclaimed in all the earth.\textsuperscript{159} There is also validity in the claim that Scripture does use election and predestination in a much broader sense.\textsuperscript{160} Therefore we are entrusted with the cautious responsibility of weighing whether the aforementioned scriptural texts necessitate an understanding of predestination that pertains merely and uniformly to individual destinies. Based on the cited scriptural contexts, I am arguing that such an emphasis and focus is the salvific plan of God through Christ Jesus and His suffering on the cross. This emphasis resolves the dilemma caused by the inevitable implications of double predestination without diminishing the centrality of the unmerited mercy of God in His divine redemption through the ways and works of the Triune God in Christ Jesus.

\textsuperscript{156} 1 Cor. 2:7, 8: “No, we speak of God's secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began . . . have crucified the Lord of glory.”
\textsuperscript{157} Eph. 1:5, 7: “He predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will . . . In him we have redemption through his blood.”
\textsuperscript{158} Eph. 1:11, 12: “In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will . . . for the praise of his glory.”
\textsuperscript{159} Rom. 9:17.
\textsuperscript{160} Such as the national election of Israel as the chosen nation and the contextual implications of the predestinational texts cited earlier.
Through the election of the cross, the extent of God’s longsuffering and the wideness of God’s merciful plan is manifested. God’s mercy beckons the elect through the cross of Christ, even though they were once the hardened vessels of wrath and the non-elect; and through the cross the incomparable riches of His grace and glory may be shown and known. The election of the cross of Christ ensures that Paul’s own people, the Jewish Israel, can obtain the righteousness of God that is freely by faith, neither by absolute decree nor by works (Rom. 9:30-32). Christ has finished all the works on the cross “so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes” (Rom. 10:4). Through the election of Christ, our security and perseverance are founded in fellowship with Him, not in an absolute decree; for an absolute decree provides no intimate communion. He is our covenant, our decree, our election, our fountain, our promise and our “Yes and Amen” in the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of the Triune God.

Predestination calls attention to the far-reaching plan of God in human redemption, sanctification and glorification in His eternal purpose for His eternal praise. Predestination as a gospel of the cross then speaks to the whole of humanity, which is lost and condemned in sin, just as justification speaks to them as a gospel of grace. In addition, the “Crucified God” is not the same as an “absolute decree God,” as the traditional Calvinists would have understood it. Barth’s conception of God’s absolute decree, if one may speak in such terms, departs from the tradition. Barth claims that it is God’s gracious determination to be “for” humanity in the person of Jesus Christ. The decree has its content first and sum in Jesus Christ.

This decree is perfect both in subject and object. It is the electing God and also the elected man Jesus Christ, and both together in the unity the one with

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161 Psalm 36:9.
162 CD II/2:156.
the other. It is the Son of God in His whole giving of Himself to the Son of Man, and the Son of Man in his utter oneness with the Son of God . . . And this decree is really the first of all things. It is the decision between God and the reality distinct from Himself. It is a decision which is the basis of all that follows. And this decree is itself the sum and substance of all the wisdom and power with which God has willed this reality and called it into being. It is the standard and source of all order and all authority within God's relationship to this reality. It is the fixing of an end for this reality, foreordained, valid without question, unfailing in efficacy. It is itself the eternal will of God. The will of God is Jesus Christ, and this will is known to us in the revelation of Jesus Christ. If we acknowledge this, if we seriously accept Jesus Christ as the content of this will, then we cannot seek any other will of God, either in heaven or earth, either in time or eternity. This will is God’s will.  

In the absolute and eternal decree of Calvinism, the doctrine of predestination is individualistic in its fate; an individual’s election or reprobation is fixed and immutable. However, New Testament writers never speak of God’s decree as referring to the individual destiny of salvation or damnation, but rather as the divine determination of the cross of Christ and His role as the Judge of the living and the dead. For example in Lk. 22:22, “The Son of Man will go as it has been decreed” (ὁρισμένον, perfect passive participle from ὀριζω). The word “decree” from ὀριζω is used 8 times in the New Testament — Lk. 22:22; Acts 2:23; 10:42; 17:31; Rom. 1:4 — 5 times referring to Christ and His cross or His role as judge. Not once does it refer to the election or reprobation of the individual. Similarly in the Old Testament, whenever the word ‘decree’ (판) is used of God, it covers only four topics: a) the Messiah (Ps. 2:7), b) judgment against sin (Zep. 2:2, 3), c) God’s authority in His creation (Ps. 148:6; Job 28:26), and d) the Abrahamic covenant with Israel (1 Chron. 16:16-18; Ps. 81:4; 105:9).

163 *CD II*/2:157.
164 Again, we must be careful not to use a term beyond its clear and simple biblical usage. Otherwise biblical terminology becomes a theological jargon and springboard rather a theological source and foundation of biblical understanding. Thus, to argue that Judas and the individuals mentioned in the pastoral epistles of Jude and John (classified as “deceivers” and “antichrists”) have been decreed for damnation is a misuse of biblical terminology. It stretches the theological implications beyond the clear teaching of Scripture.
The key point of contention here is not the nature of God’s decree, which never changes or fails; it is rather the content of God’s decree. Did God decree the fate of those who were to be saved and condemned, or did He decree His salvific plan through the atonement of Christ on the cross? Additionally, we must determine whether the immutability of God’s decree pertains more to the cause or the consequence of reprobation. The cause of reprobation refers to the predestination of the individual—God had foreordained those sinners to be reprobates and that decree does not change. The consequence of reprobation implies the inevitable judgment of damnation for the guilt of the reprobates in their stubborn violation of God’s law and hence their ultimate rejection of God Himself. The implication according to Calvin and the Reformers’ doctrine of reprobation is that God’s predestination is the primary cause of the guilt and damnation of the reprobates rather than a consequence.

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165 The references to those whose “names are written in the book of life” (i.e. Ex. 32:32; Ps. 69:28; 139:16; Isa. 4:3; Phil. 4:3; Rev. 3:5; etc.) have provoked inquiries concerning whether individual destiny is bound up with God’s will. First, the decree of the salvific plan through the cross inevitably has individual salvation as its objective. However, the difference lies in its focus and emphasis: the salvific plan (primary) versus individual fate (secondary). Second, the book of life is to be understood metaphorically in two senses: as the knowledge of God and as the book that leads to life, i.e. the Old and New Testaments (ST, I, 24, 1). Third, the knowledge of God implies both the assurance and the warning of God in the context of suffering. It offers assurance for those whose walk faithfully with God, especially in times of suffering and persecution. It offers a warning to those who reject the grace and the cross of God (cf. the context of Ps. 69:28, particularly verse 21) such that their names will be blotted out of the book of life (cf. Rev. 3:5). Names are blotted out not by decree but by rebellious hearts. Thus the content of God’s decree lies in His salvific plan through the cross, not in the fates of double predestination.

166 Calvin uses “cause” in two senses: a) God’s hidden decree and b) the sin of humanity. Regarding the first he writes: “And this is what I said to begin with, that we must always at last return to the sole decision of God’s will, the cause [emphasis added] of which is hidden in him” (Inst., III.23.4). He further states: “God not only foresaw the fall of the first man, and in him the ruin of his descendants, but also meted it out in accordance with his own decision” (ibid., 23.7). Regarding the sin of humanity, Calvin remarks that “Their perdition depends upon the predestination of God” (primary cause), but “the cause and occasion of it [secondary cause] are found in themselves” (ibid., 23.8). Beza and John Knox clearly teach that the primary cause of reprobation is the decree of God while the secondary cause of reprobation is human sin and corruption. Cf. William A. McComish, The Epigones: A study of the theology of the Genevan Academy at the time of the Synod of Dort, with special reference to Giovanni Diodati (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 1989), 78; Richard G. Kyle and Dale W. Johnson, John Knox: An Introduction to His Life and Works (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2009), 129.
Summary

The cross of Christ is a vivid demonstration that God is not an almighty spectator of the outcome of His eternal decree. As God the Son hangs on the cross, He is hanging “between the sufferer and the one who causes the suffering, between the victim and the executioner, God . . . is on the side of the sufferer. God is on the side of the victim, he is hanged.”\textsuperscript{167} The cross of Christ proclaims that God is on the side of the victim of sin because He is a “friend of tax collectors and sinners” (Matt. 11:19). By claiming that God Himself is on the side of the godless, He incites the devout against Him and is cast out into the godlessness of Golgotha.”\textsuperscript{168} This is the “contrary appearance” in the pursuit of divine \textit{eleos}. This is the definitive decree of the predestination in which the Son must be cast out as the Reprobate to the mercilessness of the cross, in order to show forth the mercifulness of the cross. This realization should be grasped by faith as the essence of the Gospel, the election of Jesus Christ and the atonement of His cross.

What the cross affirms is that the human disposition is capable of great evil. Yet at the same time, it also acclaims God’s disposition as wholly \textit{pro nobis}—for us who, disposed to evil, by faith become cleansed and forgiven. Hence, “the cross is good news for humankind even while it is a stark reiteration of the bad news about humankind.”\textsuperscript{169} The cross is good news, for its mercilessness on the Elect speaks mercy to the reprobate. While sin dragged humanity from nobility downward to ignobility, the work of the cross and its Trinitarian suffering redeems and makes each individual a new creation by faith (2 Cor. 5:17). This occurs “through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit” (Tit. 3:5),

\textsuperscript{167} Soelle, \textit{Suffering}, 148.
\textsuperscript{168} Moltmann, \textit{The Crucified God}, 51.
\textsuperscript{169} Hall, \textit{The Cross in Our Context}, 99.
which Barth terms “creatio ex-nihilo,”¹⁷⁰ by God’s free grace. He makes the “ignoble” noble, the “useless” (Rom. 3:12) useful once again for the Lord (2 Tim. 2:20, 21, RSV). In conclusion, we humbly recognize that it is on the cross that the electing God demonstrates His love for the reprobates. He pursues them with the divine eleos in order to make them righteous, elect with the precious blood of Christ shed on the cross.¹⁷¹ The election of the cross for all eternity begins with the mystery of the electing God who gave His Son to redeem humankind through the cross.

¹⁷⁰ Barth, Romans, 102. “Such creation is assuredly genuine creation, the creation of the divine righteousness in us and in the world. When God speaks, it is done . . . This creative word is spoken—through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (ibid., 102-03).
CHAPTER 6

TRINITARIAN ELECTION IN THE THEOLOGY OF THE CROSS (III):
THE PURPOSE OF ELECTION IN THE WAY OF THE CROSS

Ἐπίγνωσιν ἡλθείας τῆς κατ᾽ εὐσέβειαν
— Titus 1:1

The theologia crucis sheds light on what the apostle Paul means by the phrase in Romans 9:11 “God’s purpose (πρόθεσις) of election.” Under the influence of Augustine and Calvin’s writings on predestination, election in the Reformed tradition has wrongly focused on individual destiny, instead of on the actual purpose of God for joining persons to Christ. That purpose, in a way distinct from the flow of the tradition of predestinarian interests, is graspable through a theologia crucis and is held accountable to that theology, because the cross itself reveals in its very form this divine purpose. To grasp such a reassessed Pauline perspective on the purpose of election, we must maintain a renewed existential focus through theologia crucis. Only from the perspective of theologia crucis will we begin to comprehend in a deeper measure how the reconciliation of humanity accomplished by Christ’s death on the cross is not merely historical, but has its firm foundation in the love of God and in His purpose of election.¹

Paul says to the Ephesians, “We are predestined according to the purpose of God” (Eph. 1:11); and he refers in Romans to the intention that “God’s purpose of election might stand” (Rom. 9:11). The traditional Reformers usually took “purpose” as the general term pertaining to the will of God as it relates to both predestination and reprobation.² In fact Calvin took this word to be synonymous with the decree of God, for “this word everywhere

² Vermigli, Predestination and Justification, 20.
in common parlance expresses a fixed determination.”\textsuperscript{3} However, it appears that such an understanding of God’s purpose of election disregards the context of the Pauline passages. Perhaps the defense of predestination has obscured the essential content of what the purpose of election might involve.

Among the few scholars who have tried to articulate such a purpose, I can identify five broad responses: a) the purpose of holiness,\textsuperscript{4} b) the purpose of making known the riches of God’s glory,\textsuperscript{5} c) the purpose of mercy,\textsuperscript{6} d) the unity of the Jewish and Gentile believers through the election of grace,\textsuperscript{7} and e) the purpose of blessing the world.\textsuperscript{8} These five purposes focus more on instrumental rather than intrinsic aspects of the purpose of God’s election, particularly the election of Israel from the Old Testament perspective. Kaminsky emphasizes the need to recognize the primary intrinsic value of “God’s mysterious love for the chosen” while taking care not to shift its purpose immediately to the instrumental obligations.\textsuperscript{9} This

\textsuperscript{3} *Inst.*, III.22.6.

\textsuperscript{4} Augustine states: “Therefore He chose us by predestinating us. Would he choose the unholy and the unclean? Now if the question be proposed, whether He would choose such, or rather the holy and unstained, who can ask which of these he may answer, and not give his opinion at once in favour of the holy and pure?” (Augustine, *On the Predestination of Saints*, XVIII.35; cf. II Timothy 1:9). Augustine is saying that those who are in fact holy and pure are so because they have been predestined to such a condition. It is not because of God’s foreknowledge regarding who will be holy and pure that he predestines such people: God’s determination is the cause of their condition. Cf. also Vermigli, *Romans*, 934, 951 and Colenso’s reading on God’s purpose of predestination (*Colenso, Romans*, 189).

\textsuperscript{5} According to Taylor, the purpose of election in verse 11 is thus linked to verse 23 where Paul asserts, “He did this to make the riches of His glory known to the objects of His mercy, whom He prepared in advance for glory” (Taylor, *Malachi*, 258). Cf. also Olevian, *Romanos*, 440.

\textsuperscript{6} “On both sides, although in different forms, God wills one and the same thing . . . As will be stated in Rom. 11:32 with complete unambiguity, this purpose is the purpose of His mercy” (CD II/2.221; cf. Sonderegger, *That Jesus Christ was born a Jew*, 124; Jewett, *Romans*, 585; Edwards, *Romans*, 232-33).

\textsuperscript{7} Watson considers that one of the key motivations of Paul in this pericope of Romans 9-11 is to encourage the Roman Jewish Christians to see a single divine electing purpose at work. This purpose is applicable to their own existence as the remnant, but it also extends to the existence of the “non-elect” Gentiles as well, for they were once “not my people” (9:26), but are now the recipients of the same divine election (Watson, *Beyond the New Perspective*, 321; cf. Johnson, *Apocalyptic and Wisdom Traditions in Romans 9-11*, 138).

\textsuperscript{8} Abasciano believes that this is suggested from the broader context of Romans and the Old Testament framework of Rom. 9:6-13 (Abasciano, “Corporate Election in Romans 9,” 363). Paul declares that God’s election of Israel commences with His covenant with Abraham and his offspring. In His covenant, God promises that they should inherit the world by faith (Rom. 4:13) through Christ.

\textsuperscript{9} “Love relationships are not best conceived in instrumental terms, especially a love relationship like that between God and Israel. The prophetic recognition that Israel’s election is intrinsic rather than instrumental is
is a needed reminder not to reduce the instrumental purpose to reluctant obligations that will eventually dissipate in time. The intrinsic aspect—God’s mysterious love for the chosen—is the core of the existential purpose, which gives it veracity and vivacity. Whether the purpose of election is considered intrinsic or instrumental, there is a prime aspect of the existential purpose of election that has scarcely been mentioned (if mentioned at all) in previous publications, namely the divine purpose according to the election of the cross. Notably the existential purpose refers to both intrinsic worth and instrumental functions in reciprocated “wholeness” and “determination.” “Wholeness” denotes who the elect are primarily in their newness of life (Rom. 6:4), while “determination” is the fortitude and keeness (πρόθυμος, Rom. 1:15) that is essential to the constructive character of the elect community. Instrumental alone refers to both “means” and “instruction”; “means” refers to the secondary obligation, while “instruction” refers to the guiding principles for the attaining of religious goals. Instrumental purpose alone can be effectual but often theoretical, because it is convention-centered. Existential purpose in the New Testament connects with the essential values and habitual conduct of the new life because it is cross-centered. Instrumental purpose takes pride in what is seen rather than in what is in the heart (II Cor. 5:12), while existential purpose is compelled by the love of Christ (II Cor. 5:14).

The primary aspect of God’s electing determination, which Paul underscores within the context of delineating God’s choice between Jacob and Esau and their descendants in

quite evident in the overarching shape of the prophetic corpus” (Kaminsky, Yet I Loved Jacob, 156). For detailed discussion in this differentiation, please refer to ibid., 153-57.  

10 The distinction between instrumental purpose and existential purpose is the difference between salt and saltiness, light and shining light. Salt (something instrumental) can lose its saltiness (something existential). Similarly, light (something instrumental) can be hidden under a bowl, thus losing its existential purpose (Matt. 5:13-16). Instrumentality speaks of duty, while existentially dwells on the grace-relationship between God and human beings (Barth, Romans, 222).
Romans 9, is this insight: *The way of the cross*\(^{11}\) is *the manifesto*\(^{12}\) of God’s purpose according to election. As explicated earlier, the story of Jacob and Esau draws attention to God’s selection purpose in their respective bloodlines—culminating in Herod Antipas, who was an Edomite and an heir of Esau, and Christ Jesus, who according to the flesh was the descendant of Jacob. As the two bloodlines of Jacob and Esau crossed paths, the purpose of the election of both the cross (primary)\(^{13}\) and the way of the cross (consequential) began to unfold at the appointed time, as the Son of God would trade places with the reprobate in order to set them free. The elected divine Son of God did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but He emptied and humbled Himself by becoming obedient to suffer death as a reprobate on the cross for the world of reprobates. This is the primary purpose of God’s election that must be unreservedly understood as Paul’s intended statement in Rom. 9:11.

The consequential purpose of God’s election is not analogous to the way of earthly glory exemplified by Esau’s descendants. Rather, it is brought about and comprehended only through the way of the cross, the way chosen by Jesus, the offspring of Jacob. Therefore, the principle of God’s election is consistent with the way of the cross. Such a shift in the theological standpoint on the purpose of election viewed through the cross presents a renewed existential direction. If we understand Jesus’ way of the cross it will change how we conceive of God’s purpose of election with respect to the following scriptural and practical foci.

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\(^{11}\) While the cross specifically points to the death and suffering of Christ for the sins of humanity, the way of the cross refers to the form of life that the elect are predestined to walk in (Eph. 2:10). Cf. Rom. 4:12.

\(^{12}\) This refers to a public statement of principles, which in this case are the existential purposes of election.

\(^{13}\) The purpose of the cross is more than instrumental; it is revelational. It is a revelation of both the immanent Trinity and the economy of the Trinitarian God in the *Heilsgeschichte*. 
The Election to Self-Giving Service and Self-Sacrificing Life

The theology of the cross redirects the overarching tenets of election from a self-gaining destiny and self-attending salvation to the sacrificial example of Christ on the cross, insofar as He altogether gave up His divine rights and privileges—“that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich” (2 Cor. 8:9; cf. Phil. 2:6-8). Paul demonstrates this self-sacrificing precedent through the pouring out of his heart to his own kinsmen: “For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my people, those of my own race, the people of Israel” (Rom. 9:3). Kaminsky suggests that a “vigilant humility” is the necessary concomitant of election theology. He stresses, “The divine favor bestowed in election is not to be used for self-aggrandizement.” Humility properly expressed within the community will come across firstly as self-restraint, and then, by extension, as a blessing. On the contrary, pride is the love of self, in which the first-person pronoun often takes the center stage in one’s deeds, thoughts and conversations. In that case, pride is contradictory to the purpose of election in self-giving service. Another aspect of the love of self is the fear of man, where self-preservation takes hold of one’s soul based on the fear of jeopardizing one’s own welfare. This is contrary to the election of the cross, where Christ went into “the far

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14 Likewise Moses, facing the impending judgment of God against the rebelliousness of His own people, pleaded on their behalf: “But now, please forgive their sin—but if not, then blot me out of the book you have written” (Ex. 32:32). Joshua is yet another example of such self-sacrificing service: “When they had finished dividing the land into its allotted portions, the Israelites gave Joshua son of Nun an inheritance among them” (Josh. 19:49). Joshua well deserved the first choice within the Promised Land; instead, with a servant’s of humility, he looked after the interests of others first. He waited until all the tribes had received their allotted lands for inheritance before he received his portion as promised to him by God.
16 Kaminsky, Yet I Loved Jacob, 78.
17 Ibid., 156.
18 Lk. 12:16-20; cf. 1 Sam. 25:11.
country” in His self-sacrificing life. He chose the incarnate life and assumed the very nature of a servant for the sake of the human plight. Through His “poverty,” man may enter into the promises of the new covenant and become “rich,” endowed with the hope and purpose of the elected life. Paul encourages the elect in Christ to serve in the same manner: as a servant of God in the ministry, imitating Christ by being “poor, yet making many rich” (2 Cor. 6:10). Such is the paradox in the election of self-giving service and self-sacrificing life. Christ’s self-giving love and self-sacrificing life charted His chosen path, “who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, scorning its shame” (Heb. 12:2), for both the elect and the reprobate. He thus beckons the elect to take up their cross and follow Him.

Furthermore, the theology of the cross transforms the paradigm of the Reformed doctrine of election from individual privilege to community wellbeing, from personal destiny to the ransom for many—“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” In his doctrine of election, Barth calls attention to “the recognition that the election of the individual must be discussed in the closest possible relation to the election of Jesus Christ and the election of the community of God.”

Certainly the traditional doctrine of election was not mistaken in speaking about the predestination of individual human beings. Nevertheless, the Scripture speaks of individuals not as an ego but as a “representative of the many” or “for all the rest.” The election of individuals has significance only when it takes into account Jesus Christ as both the Subject and the Object of the election. It is, indeed, their election which is at issue in the election of Jesus Christ. In other words, every person has been elected in his/her authentic individuality by the election of Jesus Christ, which has been attested and proclaimed to him/her. Without

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20 CD IV/1:157.
21 Mark 10:45.
22 CD II/2:308-09.
Christ, election could only emerge from nothing and proceed to nothing. It is exactly because of the original election of Jesus Christ that the *grain of truth* of “individualism” can be granted a lasting validity. Only through election in Christ will an individual’s created worth be affirmed by God’s intended purpose within a community setting. Hence, all who now live in Jesus Christ, who came forth from Israel and from whom the Church came about, will no longer live for themselves alone; they are now connected immediately to His abiding community. This direction, as emphasized by Barth, views the election of the individual reaches its full potential in the many and totality of the community.23 The correct understanding of predestination is along the same *telos*:

There are no predestined families and no predestined nations—even the Israelite nation is simply the first (transitory) form of the community—nor is there a predestined humanity. There are only predestined men—predestined in Jesus Christ and by way of the community.24

Biblically, from the Old Testament writings, one must particularly pay attention to the Deuteronomic literature. It is suffused with the idea of election ( Heb), a word occurring no fewer than thirty-one times. The Deuteronomic concept of election is of a *corporate act* in which God chooses not just individuals but a nation. Even on occasions when God chooses particular individuals, those choices are always fully connected to God’s choice of a nation.25 Furthermore, such a *corporate act* is done in the context of a covenant. The Deuteronomic covenant is an agreement that God made not solely with certain individuals, but with an entire nation.26 This also means that the covenant curse of exile and God’s condemnation would fall on the entire nation. Boersma explains:

23 CD II/2:314.
24 CD II/2:313.
26 Making a covenant with a nation is not the same as making a “predestined nation.” A covenant with a nation speaks both of relationship and responsibility, while Barth’s statement emphasizes that the establishment of predestination is in Christ and by way of the community.
The Deuteronomic Law insists that Israel as a whole—despite the uprightness of individual believers—would consistently reject the very aim of repentance and sacrifice, namely, restoration of and growth in the relationship with Yahweh . . . Significantly, exile is God’s last option. He resorts to this climatic punishment only when it becomes clear that Israel as a whole has consistently refused to repent and so to obtain forgiveness and a restoration of the relationship with Yahweh.27

When it comes to the New Testament writings, the word “church” (ἐκκλησία) points to the plurality of election in the community of the cross. Peter describes this community as “a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation” (I Pet. 2:9). The special covenant of God, which once belonged to the nation of Israel exclusively (Ex. 19:5, 6; Deut. 7:6) now welcomes and embraces the greater ἐκκλησία community. Peter then picks up the theme of Rom. 9:25 in the context of God’s mercy: “Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy” (I Pet. 2:10). The theological perspective that Peter maintains here is that the new privilege obtained by the New Testament elect community is one shared with the Old Testament elect community in Israel. Barth notes that the general conclusion in the New Testament passages, which mention the ἐκλογή or προορισμός of God in relation to the individual “is that election or predetermination in the New Testament means election or predetermination to being in the community or Church of Jesus Christ.”28 In addition, ἐκλεκτοί in Tit. 1:1 and 2 Tim. 2:10 are clearly and unreservedly identified with the community.29 Barth also introduces another concept describing the relationship between election and the Church as “coinciding

27 Ibid., 175. Cf. note 72: “Again, this is not to say that individual Israelites would not have had their relationship with God restored by the OT means of reconciliation. Scripture (in particular the Psalms) calls many people ‘righteous.’ The point is that Israel as a whole did not abide by Torah and its means of reconciliation” (ibid., 175).
28 CD II/2:426.
29 CD II/2:427.
The personal pronouns mentioned in conjunction with election passages, such as “our”, “us”, “we” or “you” and “they”, are always in plural form, suggesting that election is not about individuality, but rather refers to the totality of all Christians, the Church. As such, Christian existence should never rest content with a personal predestination. The New Testament makes it clear that there is no election to anything else or to any situation other than the Church.

There is no election of an individual man on the basis of which he is not led by the Word into faith, and therefore into the fellowship of believers, and therefore into the Church. What is promised him as an elect person, what is expected of him as such, what he receives from God and what under God he will become, is never a special gift or task or destiny peculiar to himself. One may wonder how then individuals are elected into the community of the Church? Barth reckons that this is one of the works of the Holy Spirit in the Trinitarian ministry of election: “This covenant work of the Spirit in time is both an individual and a corporate work.” It is the Holy Spirit electing individuals through the community and for the community. This, likewise, affirms the teaching of the apostle Paul: “For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink” (1 Cor. 12:13; cf. Eph. 4:3-6).

This reorientation from a view of election that focuses on individual destiny to the election of the Church as a community is the right direction in moving away from the narcissistic culture that has often infiltrated the Church. This theological reorientation reveals the scope of what God wills for human beings when, in His eternal election of grace,

\[30 CD\ II/2:428.\]
\[31 \text{Only once does Paul, in Rom. 16:13, mention about an individual Christian in connection with election.}\]
\[32 \text{Balthasar, Karl Barth, 184.}\]
\[33 CD\ II/2:427.\]
\[34 Paul Nimmo, “Barth and the Election-Trinity Debate: A Pneumatological View,” in Trinity and Election in Contemporary Theology, 169.\]
He elects them for fellowship with Himself through the fostering of the Church community.\(^{35}\) The Church’s form of community reveals God, who “chooses for man His whole selflessly self-giving love.”\(^{36}\) This *whole selflessly self-giving love* is demonstrated in one of the greatest Christological passages in the New Testament, one which “sounds the depths of the incarnation”\(^{37}\) and speaks of Christ’s *self-giving service* and *self-sacrificing life*. “He made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!” (Phil. 2:7, 8). This *whole selflessly self-giving love* is the way of the cross (i.e., “take up your cross and follow Me”), which in turn sets the tenor and the guiding principle for the individuals elected through and for the elected community.\(^{38}\) This *whole selflessly self-giving love* reaches the fullest extent both in time and in tangible measure on the eve of the crucifixion.\(^{39}\) On that evening, Jesus took the role of a servant to wash the disciples’ feet, even though He was their Master and knew that they would completely abandon Him within a few hours. The disciples’ competitive and hierarchical spirit would not allow *self-sacrificial service* in the elect community. Yet the Elect Man sets the example of servitude in love, personifying the humility and the working of inner grace that ought to mark the practice and purpose of the elect community.

\(^{35}\) *CD II* 2:265.  
\(^{36}\) Ibid., 210-11.  
\(^{38}\) Lk. 14:25-27.  
\(^{39}\) Jn. 13:1.
The Election to Embrace the Offender with Mercy and Hope

The cross of Christ no doubt is the prime locus where God’s mercy is determinately revealed. Divine mercy is not simply an expression of benevolence, nor does it counter an act of offence with forgiveness alone. Rather, divine mercy first takes the place of the offender by suffering with, and on behalf of, what humankind ought to have suffered for their own sins. The reason for the divine provision of mercy is the presence of sin and its consequences. While sin is the deprivation (privation) of good and the depravation of the mind (Rom. 1:28; 2 Tim. 3:8), divine mercy is the restoration of good by the conformity of the reprobate to God’s goodness, and the purification of the heart through the blood of Christ shed on the cross. Divine mercy does not suspend justice. Rather it must be understood in terms of God’s justice and holiness; it transcends justice by doing something more than justice. Conversely, Jewett expresses with equal awareness, “Divine justice is primarily a matter of mercy.” This echoes the view of Jeremiah when he prayed: “Correct me, Lord, but only with justice—not in anger, lest you reduce me to nothing” (Jer. 10:24).

Mercy becomes pseudo-mercy when it no longer has a trace of trembling before a holy God who judges sin. Although the wages of sin is death, where death is understood as a separation from God and thus the antithesis of hope (Eph. 2:12), divine mercy goes a step further than justice. Beyond justice, mercy must be followed by an altruism which

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40 The Latin word for mercy is misercordia, literally meaning a heart (cor) for the poor or wretched (miseri), thus pity or benevolence.
42 Rom. 3:25; Eph. 1:7; 2:13; Col. 1:20; Heb. 9:14; 1 Jn. 1:7; cf. Lev. 16:19.
43 ST, 1.21.3: “God acts mercifully, not indeed by going against His justice, but by doing something more than justice; thus a man who pays another two hundred pieces of money, though owing him only one hundred, does nothing against justice, but acts liberally or mercifully.” Sanders points out that in Rabbinic literature, “mercy outweighs justice” (Sanders, Paul and Palestinian Judaism, 124).
44 Jewett, Romans, 581.
46 Rom. 6:23.
offers the offender a renewal and instills responsible hope. Mercy alone is a second chance, but mercy coupled with renewal and responsible hope is the gift of transformation. Mercy alone begets temporal gratitude, but mercy with living hope cultivates perpetual trust. However, if mercy is given without hope, it lacks durability—it is short-lived and superficial. If hope is offered without mercy, it lacks authenticity—it is seen as hollow and hypocritical. Hope is therefore the inseparable companion of divine mercy. Mercy, with renewal and living hope, is accomplished and provided through the cross of Jesus Christ.

In His mercy, epitomized through the cross, God takes His salvation of all people seriously\(^{47}\) and offers them living hope (1 Pet. 1:3, 4). These and similar verses are God’s open gospel invitation for all to trust in His divine mercy through the cross.\(^{48}\) Therefore, election reckons with the theology of the cross and embraces the nonbelievers and the offenders earnestly and receptively with both divine mercy and living hope. Christ said, “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance” (Lk. 5:31, 32). The sick are in need of the hope of wholeness as the sinners are in need of the hope of worthiness (2 Tim. 2:21).

Often the traditional Reformed doctrine of election connotes the exclusionary rhetoric that tends to prematurely characterize the majority of nonbelievers as the reprobates who are without hope.\(^{49}\) Yet the message of the cross declares that God’s mercy reaches to the lowest hell\(^{50}\) and gives the forsaken sinners the hope of the highest heaven. The moment that God forsook His Son on the cross to the lowest hell was the very moment that the veil in the


\(^{48}\)Scripture records no assertion of a universal salvation of every individual. In fact, many will uncaringly ignore or spitefully reject His gospel invitation (Matt. 22:1-6).

\(^{49}\)Perhaps this is the reason for which Colenso in the preface to his commentary on Romans states that a missionary—we might say, in the context of this dissertation, a “frontier missionary”—reads Romans with a different viewpoint than those commentators who simply write from within their library walls.

\(^{50}\)Cf. Chapter 4, Excursus, 206-07.
temple was torn apart, signifying to sinners the hope of accessing the Holy of Holies through the cross. Thus Barth cautions proponents of the traditional Reformed doctrine of predestination against the impending danger of shrugging off the unevangelized Gentiles as heathen and reprobate, as if God’s election and love for humanity did not apply to them, and as if God’s covenant of grace had not been sealed for them.\(^{51}\) Barth states that the responsibility of the elect in the community is “to attest, represent and portray that which God really is and does in Jesus Christ alone.”\(^{52}\) The implicit warning here is not to stereotype the human race through Calvin’s doctrine of predestination.\(^{53}\) Therefore, it is not the elect’s business to choose or to reject others\(^{54}\) but to become the testimony of the\textit{ loving-kindness}\(^{55}\) of God in Christ:

\begin{quote}
But this means that the testimony which the elect man has to present to others has necessarily a very definite order. He cannot place before them the divine electing and the divine rejecting as two possibilities which are equally open. He can only show them God’s election as the possibility which is basically open, and God’s rejection as the possibility which is basically excluded—because it is excluded by God’s offering of Himself.\(^{56}\)
\end{quote}

Accordingly, the cross asserts that the crucified God is a God who characteristically enacts deliverance for the offender and the reprobate with mercy and hope: “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In His great\textit{ mercy} he has given us new birth into a living\textit{ hope} through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade” (1 Pet. 1:3, 4, emphasis added).\(^{57}\) “Israel, put your\textit{ hope} in the LORD, for with the LORD is unfailing love (חֶסֶד,\textit{ mercy}) and with him is full

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{52}{CD II/2:415.}
\footnote{53}{This does not assume that Calvin was trying to pigeonhole people with respect to their election.}
\footnote{54}{CD II/2:415.}
\footnote{55}{“We must not share the divine election of grace as anything other than a decision of His loving-kindness” (CD II/2:418).}
\footnote{56}{CD II/2:416.}
\footnote{57}{Cf. Lk. 23:34; Rom. 2:4; 11:32.}
\end{footnotes}
redemption” (Ps. 130:7, emphasis added).\(^{58}\) In the depth of Judah’s affliction after the devastation of Jerusalem, the prophet Jeremiah called to mind the mercies (plural, v. 22) of God that flow fully, surely and continuously because of His everlasting covenant\(^ {59}\) with the elect—“they are new every morning.” Therefore, he declared, “I have hope” (Lam. 3:21-23). Attested throughout biblical history, we find that in divine mercy there is hope; and in living and responsible hope, there is mercy.

The biblical stories of Joseph and Abraham are eminent illustrations of the larger canonical understanding of election. Joseph himself typifies the elect “servant” suffering both under the antagonizing sons of Israel and the irate Potiphar. Yet this “suffering servant” demonstrates the responsible hope and divine mercy of the elect in embracing the offenders.

But Joseph said to them, “Don’t be afraid. Am I in the place of God? You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives. So then, don’t be afraid. I will provide for you and your children.” And he reassured (ךָחַם, comforted) them and spoke kindly to them.\(^ {60}\)

Joseph demonstrated mercy with words of compassion that extended forgiveness to his brothers for past offences. He instilled new hope in his brothers by appealing to the unforeseen purpose of God and assuring them of his own responsible provision for them. One could reason that such a merciful attitude is easily shown towards one’s own siblings. Yet the true accent of the kindness is placed on the expression of responsible hope and compassionate mercy extended by the chosen brother.

The story of Abraham’s intercession for the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah in Genesis 18 epitomizes the merciful heart of the elect towards the reprobate. It may appear uncharacteristic that the chosen Abraham would even care about the reprobate of Sodom and

\(^{58}\) Cf. Isa. 63:9.
\(^{59}\) Deut. 7:9; Ps. 89:28.
\(^{60}\) Gen. 50:19-21.
Gomorrah, which were eventually destroyed. He could have easily believed that prayer is superfluous, or he could have marginalized those in the cities as non-elect, while simply praying for God to bring his nephew, Lot, out from them. Instead, Abraham’s heart was full of compassion, even for the wicked people who resided in Sodom and Gomorrah. With humility and persistency, Abraham interceded for the fate of the reprobate people that deserved eternal damnation, as they were also made in the image of God.

The high point of the Old Testament revelation of God’s mercy is recorded in the dramatic story of the prophet Hosea redeeming his adulterous wife, Gomer. God uses the prophet’s painful experience to demonstrate His mercy and compassion to His unfaithful people Israel. Then in very graphic words, God pivotally states: “My heart is changed (חָפַךְ, torn, recoils, churns, turns over) within me; all my compassion is aroused (כָּמַר, stirred, overflowed, kindled)” (11:8). Amidst the wickedness of Israel, subversion takes place in God’s own self in that He turns His justice upside down and His compassion overtakes His blazing wrath; His mercy transcends His justice and discloses the total profundity of the divine mystery of mercy.61 “I will not carry out My fierce anger; nor will I devastate Ephraim again. For I am God and not man, the Holy One among you. I will not come in wrath” (11:9). Contrary to all human nature, the holy God elects not to condemn the persistently reprobate people with the terror of justice, but to embrace this rebellious people with the hope of God’s healing (11:3) and to draw and lead them with cords of compassion (11:4). As Kasper suggests, “Mercy is God’s creative and fertile justice.”62

Consequently, the determination of the elect in the community, under which the elect live, is to constantly be involved with the “ministry of reconciliation” (2 Cor. 5:18) and

61 Kasper, Mercy, 50-51.
62 Ibid., 54,
nothing else.\textsuperscript{63} On the cross, the Trinitarian God has initiated the ministry of reconciling the world to Himself in and through the Son, Jesus Christ. We can note the little phrase in verse 19, “not counting people’s sins against them.” The ministry of reconciliation that the elect are called to is not just embracing the offender and reprobate with mercy by not counting their sins against them. It further embraces the offender and the reprobate by pointing them to the mercy of the cross. On the cross the Father laid upon the Son all the guilt and wrath that the sins of the reprobate deserved, and He points them to living hope through the Son’s resurrection from death on the cross. Thus the ministry of reconciliation embraces the offender and the reprobate with divine mercy and living hope. The elect are then mindful to embrace others with the embrace that they received from God; such an embrace impels them to mature in His grace and conform more to His likeness, thereby living out the purpose of divine election for which we are predestined.\textsuperscript{64} Therefore, Barth calls attention to the fact that the doctrine of election was always election to reconciliation. The doctrine of election is explicated by everything in the doctrine of reconciliation through the cross.\textsuperscript{65}

As stated earlier, the extent of God’s mercy to the hardened, the vessels of wrath and the non-elect, has categorically articulated the unbounded and incomprehensible mercy of God. If God had not extended His living and salvific act of mercy to the reprobate, where then would their hope be found? The elect must endeavor to substantiate and proclaim the

\textsuperscript{63} \textit{CD II/2:419.}

\textsuperscript{64} \textit{Rom. 8:29.} It was in the medieval and Reformation periods that writers began to stress the conformation- and sanctification-related purposes of predestination. Cf. Abelard, \textit{Romans}, 279. However, Aquinas takes this conformity as the effect or terminus of, not the reason for predestination (Aquinas, \textit{Romans}, 8:28-32, §703; cf. Olevian, \textit{Romanos}, 371, 424-25, 440; and Stephens, “The Church in Bucer’s commentaries on the Epistle to the Ephesians,” \textit{Martin Bucer}, 48). Augustine states that the purpose of predestination is “the resolve to be merciful” (Aquinas, \textit{Romans}, §700). Neither Augustine nor Chrysostom even touch on the topic of conforming to the image of Christ in their commentaries (Augustine, \textit{Propositions}, 27; Chrysostom, \textit{Romans}, Homily 15.29), while Origen dwells more on the relationship between foreknowledge and predestination (Origen, \textit{Romans}, 7.7.5-7).

free mercy of Christ on the world of the reprobates, especially those who have not yet heard His name. Even in facing opposition, those who have recognized their election in Christ will not be weary of preaching Christ and God’s mercy, even if their audiences prove to be stubborn; for it is precisely the nature of God’s mercy to pursue stubborn hearts.\textsuperscript{66} Theological complications arise, of course from the historical fact that there is a good deal of stubbornness that does not crumble in the face of divine persistence, at least visibly. It is this kind of observation, often made in the face of Christian preaching, that contributes to reflections on predestination of a certain kind: if divine grace alone can melt human stubbornness, and not all human stubbornness seems to soften, what are we to conclude but that God limits His mercy? These reflections are not bibliically or theologically permissible, for three reasons. First, they are incongruent with Paul’s great anguish and his heart’s desire (Rom. 9:2-3; 10:1). Otherwise, Paul would not have dwelt on the immense purpose of mercy directed towards the undeserving sinners, including himself, in Romans 9. Secondly, predestination and foreknowledge in the Pauline epistles\textsuperscript{67} surround the theme of the determination of the cross of Christ, which forbids such limitation. On the cross, Christ was subjected to mocking scorn, yet His cross directs our theological attention to the heart of God, “who wants all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of truth” (1 Tim. 2:4, cf. 2 Pet. 3:9) and “who is the Savior of all men, and especially of those who believe” (1 Tim. 4:10, cf. Acts 17:30; Tit. 2:11). Third, the wideness and inexhaustible mercy of God lies at the crux of both the Gospel (Lk. 23:34) and the Hebrew Scripture (Lam. 3:22-23).

\textsuperscript{66} God’s persistence in the face of the elect’s stubbornness is demonstrated even towards His chosen prophets (see Jonah 1 and 4).
\textsuperscript{67} Rom. 8:29-30; 11:2; 1 Cor. 2:7; and Eph. 1:5, 11. Cf. also Acts 2:23; 4:28 and 1 Pet. 1:2, 20.
While election comes to humankind only in the form of forgiveness, so also forgiveness comes to the offenders only when they embrace the mercy of God. Their hope of restoration comes through the priestly offering of Christ on the cross for their sins, and through the power of His resurrection in the Spirit of God. As such, God’s election of the reprobate can only be manifested in the context of God’s mercy and hope, while God’s mercy and hope for the reprobate can only be expressed in His compassionate embrace (Lk. 15:20).

The Election to Bring Light to the Darkness of the World

In Paul’s reference to “the glory” (Rom. 9:4) that was entrusted to the Israelites, he has in mind more than the Shekinah glory, the cloud which rested on the ark and filled the tabernacle. On the basis of his frequent citations of Isaiah, we can say with a degree of certainty that “the glory” (Rom. 9:4) also refers to the coming Christ as the light for the nations (Isa. 60:1-3). Paul further connects the light of the gospel to the glory of Christ and God (2 Cor. 4:4, 6). Luke makes a similar implication when he records the prophetic praise of Simeon in Luke 2:30-32, “For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all nations: a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel.” The salvation of God, which began with Israel in glory, compels them to be a blessing of light to the Gentile nations that dwell and walk in darkness. This directive also has reference to Isaiah 9:2, 42:6 and 49:6, where Christ is elected to be a covenant (cf. Gal. 3:16-17) and a light for the salvation of people from all nations who live in the land of the shadow of death.

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68 CD II/2:315.
69 These passages clearly suggest that the Servant of the Lord is Christ: Isa. 42:6-7, cf. Lk. 4:18; and Isa. 49:6-7, cf. Isa. 55:5; Lk. 2:32; Acts 13:35; Rev. 16:5.
Through the broader context of Romans 2-4 and the Old Testament framework embedded in Romans 9:4-5, Paul declares that God’s election of Israel commenced with His covenant with Abraham and his offspring. In His covenant, God strategically chose the elect Israel to be a light to the world that sits in darkness (Isa. 42:6; 49:6; 60:3; cf. Acts 13:47 where Paul applies “light” to his own people). Furthermore, Abraham and his line were chosen to mediate God’s blessing as a light to the nations through Christ. The implications of Romans 9:4 thus constitute a sobering challenge, one which Paul invokes to remind his people of what they already know, insofar as they have been called to be a light to the nations. Nevertheless, the elite-elect of the chosen nation regard themselves as benefactors in regard to the knowledge of God, contrary to the poor blind Gentiles that sit in the darkness of idolatry. They pride themselves much on the possession of the oracles of God, considering themselves “a guide of the blind, a light of those who are in darkness, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of little children” (Rom. 2:19-20). Hence, Paul and other Scripture writers point out the failure of Israel in disregarding and misappropriating the purpose of their election. Paul likewise warns the elect Gentiles not to be high-minded (ὑψηλοφρονόω, Rom. 11:20) about their own election, attempting to convert their Jewish

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70 The covenant that God made with Abraham and his posterity had its foundation in Christ as the blessing of all nations (Gen. 22:18). This blessing is fulfilled through Christ and God’s covenantal people as the light to the Gentiles, because Christ illumines the deep and thick darkness of the nations. In this “Christ has brought salvation to all indiscriminately.” See Calvin, Commentary on the Prophet Isaiah, vols. III & IV, trans. William Pringle (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1948), 3:294-95.

71 Gen. 12:3; Isa. 49:6; Lk. 2:30-32; Jn. 8:12; 12:46; Acts 26:23. In fact, God had chosen a reprobate Moabite, Ruth, to be the bearer of the Seed of Abraham (Gen. 22:18, Matt. 1:2-5) and to ultimately bring blessing to the nations. Thus the Jewish scholar Levenson observes that chosenness is mostly about obligation and reconciliation, which lies at the heart of the Gospel as well as the Hebrew Bible (as observed by William C. Placher in “Christ Takes Our Place: Rethinking Atonement,” Interpretation 53.1, [1999]: 12; cf. Levenson, The Death and Resurrection of the Beloved Son, Chapter 16). According to Vriezen, “In the OT the choice is always the action of God, of His grace, and always contains a mission for man; and only out of this mission can man comprehend the choice of God” (Th. C. Vriezen, Die Erwählung Israels nach dem AT: vol 24, Abhandlungen zur Theologie des Alten und Neuen Testaments [Zurich: Zwingli-Verlag, 1953], 109, cited by Seebass, “בחר”, TDOT, 87).
counterparts in a condescending manner,\textsuperscript{72} lest they also be displaced (Rom. 11:22). It is due to their complacent smugness that the elect of Israel have fallen away from the purpose of their calling, priding themselves on cursing the darkness instead of being a light to the world of darkness.

In the New Testament, the phrase “the light of the world” refers both to Christ Himself and to His followers. It is interesting that after the very first record of Jesus claiming to be the light of the world, immediately the story turns to the adulterous woman (Jn. 7:53-8:11).\textsuperscript{73} This story is a fine illustration of God’s mercy with living hope triumphing over the Law, which prescribes capital punishment by stoning for an adulteress. Due to mercy, there is no condemnation, as illustrated by “neither do I condemn you” (8:11a). The “elite-elect” religious leaders scornfully condemned the “reprobate” adulteress, yet the Elect Son of Man stooped down to lift the “reprobate” with mercy and give her living hope: “Go and leave your life of sin” (8:11b).\textsuperscript{74} Concurrently, He addresses the people watching these events with the words, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life”\textsuperscript{75} (8:12, emphasis added). How desolate would the darkness be for the woman before her accusers in John 8 if Christ was not present that day?

\textsuperscript{72} Cf. Luther, Romans, 144.
\textsuperscript{73} Cf. LW 23:319.
\textsuperscript{74} Cf. Isa. 55:7.
\textsuperscript{75} “The genitive of life, in accordance with the Hebrew idiom, is employed, instead of the adjective, to denote the effect; as if he had said, the life-giving light” (Calvin, John, 325). Barth describes the various implications of this phrase as follows: “We have now to speak of the light of life, of the light which life itself radiates because it is itself light. As Jesus Christ lives, He also shines out, not with an alien light which falls upon Him from without and illuminates Him, but with His own light proceeding from Himself. He lives as the source of light whose shining gives light without . . . We understand His life as the work of His self-actualisation as Reconciler, Saviour and Mediator” (CD IV/3:46-47).
Likewise, darkness—“the abysmal depth of iniquity”\textsuperscript{76}—rules wherever He is not and reigns whenever He is not present.\textsuperscript{77}

The wrath of God would be great against the sins of humanity if Christ was not present on the cross. Berkouwer remarks that the wrath of God turned about-face and punished sin in His beloved Son, Jesus Christ, with the bitter and shameful death of the cross. In this act, the essence of sin is revealed by the “true light” (1 Jn. 2:8) that shines even more as the history of redemption unfolds.\textsuperscript{78} Apart from the light of the cross,\textsuperscript{79} every insight into the nature of sin is bound to be deficient. Berkouwer explains:

This because the nature of sin is to render men blind. Therefore there is no access to the knowledge of sin if we merely look at “sin itself.” Sin thrives on the strategy of exculpation and concealment. For that reason it opposes the revelation of our guilt. Only the light of God’s revelation [through Christ and the cross] can make possible a knowledge of sin which is any more than “worldly grief” (2 Cor. 7:10).\textsuperscript{80}

The cross stood firm against darkness as Jesus was hung on the cross, engulfed by darkness.

This confrontation was unavoidable as the darkness assaulted and engulfed the cross, as if the cross was foolishness and weakness before the tyranny and the annihilation of death.

Darkness, though it seemed to reign in the presence of the cross, discovered that in reality it was engulfed by the light of the world in resurrection victory.

Noteworthy also are both the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5-7) and the Sermon on the Mission (Matt. 9:36-10), which dwell on the topics of the light of the world (5:14-16) and the

\textsuperscript{76} Torrance, \textit{Incarnation}, 239.

\textsuperscript{77} \textit{LW} 23:319.


\textsuperscript{79} John in particular portrays Christ as light piercing through the darkness of the world (Jn. 8:12, “I am the light of the world . . . the light of life”; 1 Jn. 1:5-7, “God is light”), and he contextualizes this portrayal with reference to the cross (Jn. 8:28, “When you have lifted up the Son of Man”; 1 Jn. 1:7, “The blood of Jesus”). Paul, though applying the analogy of light to both Christ and the believers, gives it a similar theological context in regard to the context of the cross (2 Cor. 4:4-6, “the light of the gospel . . . of Christ”, cf. 4:10, “the death of Christ”; Eph. 5:8, “light in the Lord”, cf. 5:2 “an offering and sacrifice”; 1 Thess. 5:5, “children of light”, cf. 5:10, “Who died for us”).

\textsuperscript{80} Berkouwer, \textit{Sin}, 276
cross (10:38). They arise from the context of human sufferings and various diseases (Matt. 4:23-24; 9:35-36). Jesus’ gospel clearly points us to the misery of the oppressed, the poor, and the socially despised working class, and His attention is in concurrence with the message of the Old Testament prophets. He is also called the “friend of tax collectors and sinners” (Matt. 11:19). In fact, Matthew applies this label based on his own encounter with Christ, who saw his fear of the angry multitude, his spirit wounded from being called scum and sinner, and his loneliness from the isolation of the community; and yet Jesus still called and chose him to be an apostle (Lk. 5:27).

The purpose of election is to bring the light of life to the darkness of the world as the Elect Son of Man has epitomized and exemplified it. When Christ calls His followers “the light of the world” (Matt. 5:14), He distinguishes them by both the intrinsic value and the existential purpose of their election. They are light-receivers as well as light-givers. As a light-receiver, the elect person has been kindled from within. As a light-giver, the elect person has the great responsibility to bring light to the dark corners of the world. In Eph. 5:8, Paul exhorts: “For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light.” Paul does not say “you were once living in darkness”; he says “you were once darkness itself.” Now, however, the elect are not only living in the light but they are light in the Lord (intrinsic quality); therefore, they are to live as children of light (existential purpose). The distinction between the hope of the elect and the plight of the reprobate is the distinctive contrast between light and darkness. Hence the distinctive purpose of the elect is to illuminate, and to do so wherever there is darkness, whether morally, physically or

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81 Isa. 58:6-7; Amos 2:7; 4:1; 5:11; cf. Ezek. 18:12.
82 Matt. 5:14, 16; Lk. 12:35; Eph. 5:8; Phil. 2:15.
83 Rom 1:21, 24, 26-30: “but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened . . . Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with
spiritually. The gospel that Jesus proclaims and enacts, set against the Old Testament background in Isaiah 35, 52 and 61, is the proclamation of God’s Kingdom and the call to human freedom, both in the immediate present suffering and in the eschatological future salvation. In defending the new freedom in Christ Jesus that the gospel has brought (Gal. 2:4), Paul concludes that the mission to the Gentiles leads them to the charitable duty and catholic disposition of caring for the poor, which Paul himself is eager to do (Gal. 2:10, cf. Rom. 15:27). The elect individual must bear in mind that the elect life of the individual cannot possibly be understood as a private matter (Matt. 5:14-15). On the contrary, the elect is saved and elected “in order that he may share actively, and not merely passively, in the work and way of the omnipotent loving-kindness of God,” to become the light that shines for all creation in the darkness.

The light of the world that comes into the world is not a God who rules and governs from above, but the God who suffers here below with His suffering people. The powerless

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85 Acts 26:18: “To open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.” Eph. 5:8: “For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light.” Cf. Jn. 1:4-5; 2 Cor. 6:14; Col. 1:13; 1 Jn. 5:5-7.
87 CD II/2:423.
88 Kasper, Mercy, 98; cf. also John 1:5. Barth elaborates that the chief purpose and determination of the elect individual is “to allow the light which has kindled within himself to shine; to pass on the good news of God’s love for man which he himself has received; and to make the calling, in which he has been given a share, his own concern in respect of all others” (CD II/2:415).
Christ on the cross takes the rejected and broken lives out of their darkness and lets His light shine in their hearts to give them the healing and transformation that only the Holy Spirit can bring. Here is the existential mission and purpose of election—the need for merging the two horizons—namely, the “light of the world” shining into the darkness of human suffering and dissolving the apparent darkness through redemption, good deeds of compassion and liberation.\(^{89}\)

**The Election to Conform to the Image of Christ as a Showcase of His Grace**

The ultimate consideration of the existential purpose of divine election is the conformation to the likeness of God’s Son,\(^{90}\) in order to make the riches of His grace and glory known in time and in eternity (Rom. 8:29; 9:23, 24; Eph. 2:1-10). The life of the elect cannot exist apart from God’s love and communion. Within that communion, the elect individual is constrained and interceded for by God’s holy covenant of love. Therefore, any discussion of the faith-abiding relationship, in its various dimensions, is only conceivable in terms of this absolute goodness of God’s covenant and its purpose for the redeemed elect to be conformed to the likeness of Christ. Paul describes this procedure of election with the phrase “chosen by grace” (Rom. 11:5).

The economic operation and pursuit of Trinitarian mercy with reference to fallen humanity and their world is a claim and summoning of God’s grace upon them. Because God is merciful, He therefore wills to be gracious. He never grows tired of extending mercy

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\(^{89}\) Traditional examples include the provision of education and cottage industries for the slum areas in third-world cities; opportunities for after-school hour tutoring and basic medical services in ghettos; the establishment of autism centres that provide educational services and skill training for all ages; works of social justice restoring the human dignity of the forgotten, unloved and unwanted, etc. For further information, see Gustavo Gutiérrez’s groundbreaking work, *A Theology of Liberation: history, politics, and salvation* (Maryknoll, N.Y., Orbis Books, 1973).

\(^{90}\) Abelard equates “the image of Christ” with “the likeness of the Father” (Abelard, *Romans*, 279; cf. Col. 1:15, Jn. 14:9). Aquinas believes the image of God is in man according to the Trinity of Persons (*ST*.1.93.5). However, Origen maintains the uniqueness of Christ’s image (Origen, *Romans*, 7.7.7).
to the fallen race because His divine mercies are always in fresh supply from His storage of plenteous grace, and every new dawn breaks from the womb of the night of trial (Lam. 3:23). At every new dawn, His mercy (חָנַן) awaits to deliver the elect with His arms of strength and His grace of salvation (Isa. 33:2). From His throne of mercy (חֶסֶד, Isa. 16:5), He is the God who gives grace upon grace—the gift of grace and the grace of giving, the fullness of grace (Jn. 1:16) and the manifold grace (1 Pet. 4:10). Paul highlights this grace in Romans 5:20: “grace overflows all the more”\(^91\) in the face of reigning sin. Grace is irresistible in that the blood shed on the cross overflows more and more in order that the reign of sin and human religion might “be dissolved catastrophically, in order that the ‘No’ of God may be transformed into His ‘Yes’, and in order that grace may be grace.”\(^92\) Rather than leave the reprobate hopelessly condemned, God has punished them in His beloved Son, Jesus Christ, through the suffering and forsakenness of the cross. Thus, the essence of grace is revealed more and more, manifesting itself both more certainly and more concretely, as the history of redemption unfolds. In the fullness of times,\(^93\) through the coming ages\(^94\) which are “made known to the nations,”\(^95\) the elect will sing the glad song of the incomparable and immeasurable riches of His grace,\(^96\) which are expressed in His kindness and mercy to the elect in Christ Jesus. Paul understands this truth in his own transformation through grace in view of God’s mercy. He who was Saul, being one among the elect nation yet a chief sinner,

\(^{91}\) Υπερεπερίσσευσεν ἡ χάρις.
\(^{92}\) Barth, Romans, 186.
\(^{93}\) Gal. 4:4.
\(^{94}\) Eph. 2:7.
\(^{95}\) Rom. 16:26, KJV.
\(^{96}\) The primacy of grace is the main focus of the medieval theologians in their expositions of Romans. See William of St. Thierry, Peter Abelard, Thomas of Aquinas and Nicholas of Lyra (cf. chapter 1).
experienced the “dissolution and catastrophe” which grace brought; and he became Paul, conforming to the likeness of Christ, the Elect Son—a wonder of grace.

Paul reflects on the exceeding riches of His transforming grace in light of God’s rich mercy towards the vessels of wrath in Romans 9:22-23. Yet many of the Reformed writers, following Luther and Calvin, explain this text in the context of the bondage of the will and double predestination, respectively. As aforementioned, exegetically these two verses read: “What if God, although choosing to show His wrath and make His power known, bore with great patience the objects of his wrath—fitted for destruction? What if He did this to make the riches of His glory known to the objects of His mercy, whom He prepared in advance for glory?” Commentators differ in their reading of ἵνα, referring either to God’s great patience or the destruction of the vessels of wrath; and this term often determines whether they interpret Paul as advocating double predestination here or not. A reading which takes Paul to emphasize God’s patience, not the vessels’ destruction, is compelling for the following reasons:

a) Paul purposefully refrains from making God the subject of “the vessels of wrath fitted for destruction,” thus giving an indication that either they are represented

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97 Barth, Romans, 186.
98 If wrath “is not a disturbance of the mind as it is in man” (Augustine, The Trinity, 13.16.21) but a reflection of His perfect holiness against the sin of unbelief and rebellion, then patience is an act of God’s mercy that flows from His being (“heart”) of love that suffers. Aquinas holds that wrath is said of God not as an emotion but as the effect of retaliatory righteousness (Aquinas, Romans, 9:19-23, §793); cf. 2 Thess. 1:6-9.
99 Luther contends against the free will of man (Luther, Romans, 126-27). Calvin, on the other hand, maintains that the vessels of wrath are appointed for the purpose of destruction. “It is the second reason which manifests the glory of God in the destruction of the reprobate, because the greatness of divine mercy towards the elect is hereby more clearly made known” (Calvin, Romans, 368-69).
100 ἐπεσκεύασε means “fitted,” not the same word as προητοιμασεν of verse 23, “prepared.” Abelard explains “fitted” as “thoroughly worthy of being obliterated” (Abelard, Romans, 300).
101 Προητοιμασεν is an aorist active indicative 3rd singular masculine verb indicating that God is the subject; while ἐπεσκεύασε is a perfect middle or passive participle in the neuter, plural, thus indicating that God is not the subject since God is a singular masculine noun. Even if God is viewed as fitting them for destruction (Murray, Romans, vol. II, 36), did He decree their destruction or simply decree the principle of the consequence of unbelief?
as fitted or that they are fitting themselves for destruction (Rom. 2:5; Gal. 6:7-8).

b) The immediate context of the quotation from Hosea points to the mercy of God in turning the adulterous people to be His beloved again, even though they are guilty of the vilest adultery in departing from the Lord (Hos. 1:2; Rom. 9:25), and though they are worthy of destruction.

c) The broader biblical context emphasizes God’s great patience, ἐν πολλῇ μακροθυμίᾳ (“unlimited patience” τὴν πᾶσαν μακροθυμίαν, 1 Tim. 1:16) toward a “disobedient and obstinate people” (Isa. 65:2; Rom. 10:21), destined for destruction (Isa. 65:8).

d) The concluding context is one of God’s mercy extending to all people after He has consigned all to disobedience (Rom. 11:32).

e) References to vessels of reproach or of ignoble purposes occur in other texts (cf. 2 Pet. 3:9; 2 Tim. 2:20), where, however, these vessels are described as the objects of God’s mercy or His patience. In 2 Tim. 2:21, Paul speaks of God waiting for these vessels to cleanse themselves so they may be instruments “for noble

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102 Origen understands “patience” in verse 22 as directed to the unbelievers and unfaithful people, in order that if, perchance, they might possibly come to their senses and be converted (Origen, Romans, 7.18.2). Chrysostom writes: “Yet still, though God knew this, ‘He endured him with much long-suffering,’ being willing to bring him to repentance. For had He not willed this, then He would not have been thus long-suffering” (Chrysostom, Homilies on Romans, 16.9:22-24). Aquinas takes a similar view: “God’s action toward them is not that he disposes them to evil, since they themselves have a disposition to evil from the corruption of the first sin . . . And the fact that he does not exact retribution immediately shows his patience, so he adds with much patience . . . For the end of election and mercy shown the good is that he might manifest in them the abundance of his goodness by calling them back from evil, drawing them to justice, and finally leading them into glory” (Aquinas, Romans, 9.19:23, §§793-94). MacArthur likewise remarks in his commentary: “God has every right to act gloriously in such judgment, but He has, by His mercy, endured with much patience a world of sinners. He has endured their unbelief, rejection, hatred, blasphemy, and iniquity, while patiently allowing time for repentance (cf. Ps. 103:8; 2 Pet. 3:9). . . . As already noted, it is not that God makes men sinful but that He leaves them in their sin unless they repent of it and turn to His Son for deliverance.” See John F. MacArthur, Romans, vol. 2 (Chicago: Moody Press, 1994), 40.

purposes, made holy, useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work” (cf. 2 Tim. 2:21). Edwards argues: “Despite the antithesis between destruction and glory (vv. 22-23), there is a distinct bias toward God’s grace and mercy in verses 22-29. Even vessels of wrath prepared for destruction are borne with much patience (v. 22). Wrath is subservient to mercy throughout Romans 9-11.”

Barth submits that the wrath of God is the form (Gestalt) of His grace and cannot exist apart from the order of God’s grace. In his commentary on Romans, he explains that the true elect of God are united with God precisely because they recognize themselves to be vessels fitted unto destruction, precisely because they see that no human being is righteous. When the absolute miracle of faith occurs and the eyes of the reprobates are opened to behold the mercy of God, they see the love of God in His harshness, His mercy in His wrath; they repent and receive the revelation of God that they are vessels of mercy. Barth concludes with this statement:

What if the existence of—vessels of wrath—which we all are in time!—should declare the divine endurance and forbearance (iii.26), should be the veil of the long-suffering of God (ii.4), behind which the vessels of mercy—which we all are in Eternity!—are not lost, but merely hidden? What if the man Esau, who is—fitted for destruction—to whom also the man Jacob belongs—endures the wrath of God only in a representative capacity [emphasis added], in order that the road may be prepared for the man Jacob, who is fitted for glory—to whom also the man Esau belongs—to enter the righteousness of God, which is hidden in His wrath and which emerges from it?

It would be too “hasty” to conclude that the vessels of wrath refer to the reprobate and the vessels of mercy refer to the elect, for vessels of mercy were all vessels of wrath at one point in time; the vessels of mercy emerged from the vessels of wrath because they responded to

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104 Edwards, Romans, 242.
105 Berkouwer, Sin, 203.
106 Barth, Romans, 358.
107 Ibid., 359.
God’s great patience and rich mercy. Should not the divine mercy of His cross give us the perspective of the place in which “the man Esau” actually belongs in God’s heart?

The final goal of predestination through the process of divine sanctification in the lives of the elect is to be conformed to the likeness of Christ. The conformity of the elect to the likeness of God’s Son begins at the cross and will reach its final and glorious completion at the second coming. Think of the image of humanity, so disfigured and putrefied by sins and transgressions, walking under the dominion of the “spirit who is at work in those who are disobedient,” and who are therefore known as “children of wrath” (Eph. 2:1-3). Then enters the great love and rich mercy (Eph. 2:4) of the Trinitarian operation of the cross where the reprobate is quickened by the summoning of grace to become “holy and without blemish” in His sight (Eph. 1:4)—what inconceivable power of grace! Morgan assuredly sums up the power of the expression “the exceeding riches of God’s grace” as follows: “It is an ocean in which all our emptiness is filled without a loss to His superabundance.”

The divine mercy is ordained to pursue people from a place of destruction to a place of transformation; from the dark valley of death to glory in the heavenly realms; from children of wrath to vessels of mercy; from enmity with God to the likeness of Christ. The ultimate purpose of God’s election is to show the incomparable riches of His grace in Christ for His eternal glory with the elect as living evidence and a showcase of His redeeming grace.

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108 Irenaeus teaches that the Triune God participates in the conformation of created beings to the likeness of God: “the Father planning everything well and giving His commands, the Son carrying these into execution and performing the work of creating, and the Spirit nourishing and increasing [what is made], but man making progress day by day, and ascending towards the perfect, that is, approximating to the uncreated One” (Irenaeus, Against Heresies, IV:38.3).
for all time. Augustine says that while God made us without us, He does not want to justify or redeem us without us. Likewise, God also does not want to glorify His matchless grace without us (2 Thess. 1:12). When Paul mentions the vessels of wrath with vessels of mercy next to each other, he does not have in mind an antithesis in mere abstraction or irreconcilable reality, but rather “an heilshistorisch perspective,” insofar as the reprobate sinners will be transformed, seemingly undeserved, into elect saints and showcases of His glorious grace (Eph. 1:6).

Summary

Through the theological lens of the cross—a theologia crucis—we are able to rethink the doctrine of predestination, particularly from the text of Romans 9, and propose that the mercy of the cross is the highlight of God’s purpose of election. The cross of Christ changes the form, the focus and the measurement of election. The focus should no longer be on the destiny of the individual (quantitative) but on Christ and His covenant in His blood (qualitative). From God’s choice between Jacob and Esau and their descendants in Romans 9, we can ascertain that the purpose of God’s election is not analogous to the way of earthly glory, as represented by the life of the descendants of Esau. Rather, the highest purpose of election is made manifest only through the way of the cross, the way chosen by Jesus, whose lineage is the offspring of Jacob. Hence, the existential directions and implications in the

110 Aquinas reads “ages” in two ways: as the present and the future life. The present pertains to those who will exist after us, while the future will be in the fatherland of glory (Aquinas, Ephesians, 2:4-7, §§89-91).
112 Berkouwer, Sin, 509.
113 “But once the covenant came to be enacted so deeply into the existence of Israel that it was written into the ‘inner man’, its whole form would change. It would be a new covenant. Such a total ‘circumcision’ was fulfilled at last in the flesh of Jesus Christ, for through his crucifixion, the new covenant was inaugurated, and the new and living way was opened up in the humanity of the Son of Man” (Torrance, Incarnation, 48). “When we turn from the Old to the New Testament, we turn from the old form of God’s covenant to its new form, where it is perfectly and finally fulfilled” (ibid., 56).
purpose of God’s election are analogous to the way of the cross with at least 4 scriptural and practical foci: a) the election to self-giving service and self-sacrificing life; b) the election to embracing the offender with mercy and hope; c) the election to bringing light and healing to the darkness of the world; and d) the election to conforming to the image of Christ as a showcase of His grace.

The message that Paul proclaims relentlessly is that, on the cross, not only was Christ crucified for him (1 Cor. 2:2) but, also on the cross, he himself was crucified with Him (Rom. 6:6; Gal. 2:20). The former claim implies that, through the cross, he has been delivered from sin’s condemnation (Rom. 8:1); the latter implies deliverance from sin’s control (Rom. 6:7, 12). The former brings us into the elective will of the Triune God, while the latter brings us into the ethical and spiritual applications of His elective purpose. The cross of Christ is not only a statement of God’s determination in election, but an existential purpose in its effects. Such a reassessed scriptural perspective on the purpose of election presents a renewed existential focus. The humility and suffering of the cross in the overall purpose of divine predestination should impel the elect to cultivate the way of the cross in exemplifying the life of the believers in the ecclesia as an appropriation of her glorious salvific hope. This is the existential purpose of election in accord with the theology of the cross.
CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION:

A CROSS WITHOUT ELECTION AND ELECTON WITHOUT THE CROSS

The study of the vast hermeneutical emphases and approaches in reading Romans over time reveals how the interpretations of this epistle have impacted the theology of election and the doctrine of predestination in each particular era. The early Church Fathers took an interest in the book of Romans as they faced the Gnostic teaching of deterministic fatalism. Therefore they expounded on the freedom of human choice, divine foreknowledge, the universal opportunity for repentance and the moral responsibility of faith, all in an attempt to clarify God’s election. The medieval theologians, enriched by the tradition of the early Church Fathers, set forth grace as the central theme of Paul’s epistle to the Romans. Hence, we notice their focus on grace influencing their reading of election in Romans 9, based on the premise that the love and goodness of God are the starting point of God’s predestination, ordained through God’s providence with the integration of human will and faith, which work under the desire of grace.

For the Reformers of the sixteenth century, the hermeneutical presupposition that the heart of the gospel is justification by faith became a central theological framework for reading Romans. Consequently, the theological emphasis on individual salvation became more prominent than in the previous eras’ interpretation of Romans. Such a reading may contribute to the theology of the sixteenth-century Reformation, which was widely entrenched in a deterministic view\(^1\) of individual destiny in the well-represented view of double predestination. However, Post-Reformation and modern scholarship on Romans has

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\(^1\) Theologians could only think deterministically to the extent that they took their eyes off Christ and His cross, which is God’s grace active in history for humanity.
presented new perspectives for contemporary readers to interpret Paul’s epistle with fresh insights and understandings. With the dawn of the twentieth century, contributions to Pauline studies, especially with respect to first-century Judaism and the reorientation of the subject and object of election, have created a wider spectrum for the reading of Romans. All these contributions are engaged in more accurately grasping the true sense of Romans 9 in reference to the theology of election and doctrine of predestination. One of the main emphases in the contribution of modern scholarship is that the human destiny of the non-elect does not have to be as stark and hopeless as presented by the traditional Reformed interpretation of Romans 9. With their Christological, grace-centered emphasis in the doctrine of predestination and the theme of the mercy of God as a universal mitigating factor, modern scholarship in general has not only returned to the tenor of both the patristic and medieval readings of Romans, but it also reflects the clear message of the Old Testament prophets, the wideness of God’s mercy—and the message that the non-elect foreigners are included in God’s blessings.

The endeavor to research the intricacy of the hermeneutical interpretations of Romans throughout the centuries motivates a desire to go back to the text once again and ask whether any viewpoints have been overlooked in order to help us read Paul’s view on election in Romans 9. Thus I propose the perspective of a “cruciform” reading of predestination.

As noted in the previous chapters, the cross is the highlight and supreme expression of God’s purpose of election. From the four suggested existential purposes of election within the context of Romans 9, we thus can affirm that the way of the cross is the manifesto of God’s purpose of election. Such a reorientation of theological standpoint in understanding the purpose of election should present a renewed existential direction for the elect
community to live out its election and mission authentically. Conversely, the cultural and political sentimentality of a cross without biblical election, or even the misguided implications of election without the perspective of the cross, will eventually become injurious to the message and mission of God’s election and the cross of Christ set apart by the Spirit. Such sentimentality also subverts our ability to faithfully serve this divine reality. Hence, this final chapter will shift from Romans 9 to a broader set of theological implications for the Church, probing two phenomena: a cross without election and election without the cross.

A Cross Without Election

The locus of a Pauline understanding of predestination and the theology of election is firmly centered in the cross of Christ. Such an understanding is built upon and coheres with a broad Scriptural witness. The cross-centered theology reveals, through Trinitarian election as it is explicated in the reconciliatory work on the cross, the essence of how God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit all effected God’s merciful purpose and earnest pursuit to reach all nations and all people for the restoration of His spiritual kingdom (Acts 3:21).\(^2\) It is the election of the cross of Christ that fully reveals “God’s Trinitarian dealing with the world.”\(^3\) Without anchoring the cross in God’s grand purpose of election, the cross often becomes misinterpreted and misrepresented “by every wind of teaching” (Eph. 4:14), including those which further a personal mystical experience or promote an ideological aspiration. Such efforts may be rightly motivated, yet they venture beyond the scope of the biblical discussion of the cross.

\(^2\) The *APOKATASTASIS* (Acts 3:21, restoration) refers also to the eschatological restoration of all cosmic reality, not just salvific intervention.

\(^3\) M. Douglass Meeks, “Moltmann’s Contribution to Practical Theology,” in Moltmann, *Hope for the Church*, 68.
For many centuries after Constantine, the Christian Church became more and more associated with the cross as a political symbol of glory and authority in governing power. The identity and the message of the cross of Christ, who was crucified in weakness and humility for the redemption of the world of humanity, had given way to imperial hegemony throughout Europe.\(^4\) Even the Crusades\(^5\) at the behest of the Papal authority, under the banner of the cross, brought about shameful massacres and blasphemous outcome.\(^6\) The cross in its election had become inverted into a sword in its conquest.\(^7\) Jennings summarizes:

Since Augustine reluctantly concluded that it was necessary to accept the military support of the empire to respond to the Donatists in North Africa, Christianity has found itself ensnared in alliances with military powers of force and domination. Indeed, this force has often been most ruthlessly deployed against other Christians, from the Donatists, to the crusades against the Cathari and Waldenensians, to the early modern wars of religion and the flagrant persecution of the Anabaptists. Even more recent history in Northern Ireland and the Balkans presents us with the same ghastly picture: in the name

\(^4\) In the fifteenth century, the Spanish Inquisition was set up to ensure the Christianization of Spain. Spanish Catholic monarchs issued harsh decrees on Jews and Muslims, ordering them to convert and receive baptism, go into exile, or face execution (Armour, *Islam, Christianity, and the West*, 62-63).

\(^5\) The word “crusade” comes from the Spanish cruzada, which means “marked with the cross” (Finley, *Key Moments in Church History*, 72). Crusaders often “took the cross” as regular pilgrims did, even wearing a cross sewn on clothing. These crusades would also become pilgrimages to propitiate one’s sins or to relieve these warrior-pilgrims of temporal penalties for their sins (Armour, *Islam, Christianity, and the West*, 69). Here again we see how the cross is being misappropriated for both political ventures and the propitiation of one’s sins based on the merit of the crusade.

\(^6\) For the reason to create Christian kingdoms in Syria and Palestine, and restoring the holy sites of the Bible that had been lost to the Arabs in the seventh century, major Crusades were rallied as just or holy war in obedience to God against Jews and Muslims (ibid., 67-68). In fact, medieval militant of the first Crusade believed that killing Jews would hasten the second coming of Christ (ibid., 131).

of one who was executed by political and military violence, limitless violence is unleashed, even upon fellow Christians.\(^8\)

Moreover, the cross has also been hijacked and greatly distorted into an excuse for anti-Semitism.\(^9\) Ironically, the cross that the Jewish Jesus had suffered on was turned by some Christian teachings against His fellow Jewish people. This is something that must stand as an indictment of certain Christian theologies.\(^10\) It is precisely when the cross is stripped of its election history, which Paul develops in Romans 9-11, that anti-Semitism becomes possible.\(^11\)

Furthermore, in the interpretations of the cross, characteristics such as obedience, submission, self-sacrifice, and willingness to suffer for the sake of Christ have become pervasive. Women especially have often been encouraged to sacrifice themselves for the sake of others, mistakenly believing that their endurance to suffering, even to violence and abusive behavior, is Christ-like in character.\(^12\) It is certainly true that “love understood as self-sacrifice can lead women to abdicate their public responsibility to use their God-given gifts on behalf of the greater community and for the common good.”\(^13\) Nevertheless, the danger of a false assumption and interpretation of the cross, a cross without election, may lead to a message of sanctioning abuse and prolonging violence that has no redemptive purpose. This is very different from the self-sacrificing love of a mother or the

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\(^8\) Jennings, *Transforming Atonement*, 55.
\(^9\) Ibid., 56.
\(^10\) Ibid., 83.
\(^11\) Although Luther urges the use of the theology of the cross in examining all doctrines, yet he fails to practice this at the latter stage of his life in his sermons and writings against the Jewish race, one of which is “On the Jews and Their Lies” (1543). It appears as though Luther forgot the message and the theology of the cross, which he represented. 
substitutionary atonement of Christ on the cross, for neither one of these is a submission to the pleasure of oppression but a submission to the purpose and election of God respectively. The election of the cross is redemptive from the tortures of sin; it is liberty from the oppression of life. The election of the cross is hope for the poor and the oppressed, liberty for the blind and the imprisoned (Isa. 61:1). The theology of the cross does not excuse or justify abusive behavior or violence against fellow human beings. Without a proper understanding of election, the cross might have the tendency to become an excuse for abusive behavior or apathy towards religious violence. With a proper understanding of election, the cross is both healing for those in abusive circumstances and strength for those in active resistance to injustice caused by sin and suffering.

The liberation movements against social injustice, gender discrimination and violence are part of the existential purpose of the way of the cross. Without taking into consideration the biblical purpose of the election of Christ and his cross, the cross itself can be viewed as an example of radical evil and oppressive violence against humanity. Perhaps this is the reason why Johnson insists that Jesus’ death was an “act of violence,” a sign of “Sophia-God’s participation in the suffering of the world,” rather than “Jesus’ passive victimization divinely decreed” as a repayment for the sin of humanity.¹⁴ Johnson thinks that the atonement concept only portrays “an underlying image of God as an angry, bloodthirsty, violent and sadistic father, reflecting the very worst kind of male behavior.”¹⁵ As a result, Johnson’s feminist interpretation of the cross, devoid of election, not only renounces any view of redemptive atonement, but also reduces the Trinitarian God’s dealing with the suffering world merely to a “compassionate God.” She further asserts that this God, spoken

¹⁵ Ibid., 124.
about in “analogy with women’s experience of relationality and care,” helps to awaken “consolation, responsible human action, and hope against hope” in the world of suffering and evil.\(^{16}\)

Recent attempts to view the cross in feminine terms have also resulted in the creation of several images of a crucified female Christ, which is often referred to as *Christa*.\(^{17}\) These attempts have stimulated discussions about the meaning of the contextualization of the Christ-event, now seen as God’s identification with suffering women, especially abused and oppressed women in many parts of the world today.\(^{18}\) There is no doubt that the intention of the *Christas* and feminist interpretations of the cross are set against the dominating force of injustice and violence towards women. However, if the interpretation of the cross dwells only on the liberation of abused women from physical suffering and departs from the historical Christ, denying what His election of the cross fully entails, we might be preaching another Christ and a different gospel (2 Cor. 11:4). This is not to say that the election of the cross and its historicity would not require a Christian compassion for the poor or renunciation of cruelty and social injustice. Christ not only came to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and light for those in darkness (Lk. 4:18-19); He also identified the elect as those who fed the hungry, gave water to the thirsty, clothed the naked, cared for the sick and comforted those in prison (Matt. 25:34-36). Christian missionaries\(^{19}\) have, over the centuries, been instrumental


\(^{17}\) In 1974 Edwina Sandys made a bronze sculpture of a Christa-figure for the United Nations Decade for Women; Almuth Lutkenhaus-Lackey also created a crucified female Christ “Crucified Woman” sculpture in Toronto; Margaret Argyle’s *Bosnian Christa* is created in reaction against the horrible experiences that women suffered in former Yugoslavia (Gudmundsdottir, *Meeting God on the Cross*, 137).

\(^{18}\) Ibid.

\(^{19}\) These are the missionaries who believe that the message of God’s love and mercy through the gospel of the cross of Christ is given to all humankind. (Cf. Colenso’s reading of Romans and the “frontier reading” that takes
means of private salvation (individual destiny), reform, where and Calcutta. Later humanitarianism and female education. Transformation infanticide and sati (cf. Vishal 20). Likewise, the biblical pattern of the cross never suggested quietism as the most appropriate solution to injustice and aggression; on the contrary, the message of the cross suggests reformation and political negotiation. In the world of influence and nullification, just like God’s radical dealings with the calls and engauges the dead to be active as “instruments of justice and mercy” (Rom. 6:13; Appropriate solution to influence and aggression: on the contrary, the message of the cross is to transform, touching on issues like sati and infanticide, women’s rights and education, labor relations and political negotiation. Whereas Gutiérrez describes this modification as “from the cultural standpoint, the indigenous people serious). For pioneering contributions of missionaries in many mission...
murderous cruelty and are war-minded no more. On the contrary, all is peace among them and nothing remains save desire for friendship. The transformation that the gospel of Christ brings from the Father’s mercy is not just a social makeover through an external liberation; rather it is a regeneration and renewal from within through the resurrection power of the Spirit as one’s self-righteousness is destroyed at the foot of the cross (Tit. 3:5). Unless the cross is taken to involve both a historical event and the elective purpose of God, the Church backslides, as she often does, into the habit of waxing eloquence. The liberative cross ends up by transmitting no redemptive deed of God toward us by focusing solely on an activism to change the world. A cloistered cross as a means merely of personal ascent to God provides no social concern or hope for one’s “neighbors” in their hopelessness and marginalization.

**Election Without The Cross**

The cultural cross, the personal cross, and the liberational cross are often ways of construing the cross without engaging election. The symbol of the cross has repeatedly been reduced to a *form of godliness* or a *political movement* that is short of the salvific purpose of the cross. On the other side of the pendulum, the debate over the issues within the doctrine of election or predestination seldom is pursued from the perspective of the cross that the apostles preached. Yet the knowledge of God and His election purpose in the New Testament are freely made known to those whose faith is engaged by the cross. Such

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24 “The Theology of the cross according to which the cross in my own life destroys all my self-righteousness so that I am judged solely in the light of Christ’s action on my behalf, through which alone I am made righteous before God, is identical with the main Lutheran doctrine of the justification of sinners through faith alone.” See Regin Prenter, *Luther’s Theology of the Cross* (Philadelphia: Fortress press, 1971), 4.

25 Ibid.
knowing circumscribes all other knowledge about election, for New Testament election cannot be separated from the event of Golgotha without becoming fallacious.

Howbeit, the debate around the classical Reformed doctrine of predestination focused on individual versus corporate election, predestined versus foreknown reprobation, limited versus unlimited atonement, and bondage of the will versus responsibility of choice. Most of the debate has either clung to the eternal decree of God or has advocated the covenantal aspect of election, typically omitting the cross-centered theology that focuses on the mercy of God in His dealings with and salvation of sinners. The debate often results in biblical doctrines being pitted against one another, almost to the eclipse of the mandate and message of the cross.

The dire danger of a theology of election without the cross is that predestination becomes a “subjective doctrine” (i.e. focused on individual salvation), where those who focus only on the determined elect misconstrue the very character of the cross. It becomes a doctrine with no purposeful and fervent connection to the “all” in the world of humanity, which the Triune God Himself created and longed to redeem. In the “subjective doctrine” of an election without the cross, faith becomes an intellectual affirmation a kind of predestination that is no longer meant as “good news of great joy that will be for all people” (Lk. 2:10, cf. Rom. 1:16; 3:21-24; 10:12-13; 11:32). As one amongst the consequences of election without the cross (an event where the destruction of all individual righteousness takes place), the doctrine of grace often appears to be an “objective doctrine” in name only. Moreover, the grace of election routinely degenerates into a self-absorbed “privilege” of the chosen few versus the forsaken state of the reprobate mass. The term “election” has been
manipulated to exclude others and used to legitimize disdain for other cultures and faiths.\textsuperscript{26} Imperceptibly, individual righteousness assumes its throne as a judge who judges in place of the One who is the Judge (Matt. 7:1; 1 Cor. 4:5a; Heb. 12:23; Jas. 4:11-12).

A mistaken concept of the gift of election without the cross had been misappropriated by the hardened Jews to exclude the Gentiles as people of God (Rom. 9:14-24). Paul had to remind his kinsmen that God’s mercy is wider and more mysterious than they could imagine. In light of the cross, His mercy is extended to both Jews and Gentiles alike (Rom. 10:9-13). Paul equally warns the Gentile believers not to feel conceited towards the chosen Israel, who are but temporarily set aside. Becoming newly-chosen people of God through divine grace does not allow any measure of arrogance towards other nations since they too are individuals included in God’s merciful purpose\textsuperscript{27} through the cross (Rom. 11:17-32). Such pride in being “the chosen” was often employed to justify the domination of one people or culture over another, in Israel\textsuperscript{28} and elsewhere.\textsuperscript{29} Time and again, empires justified their dominion over third-world countries\textsuperscript{30} or the colonization of indigenous people\textsuperscript{31} by means of the misguided or self-proclaimed notion of being the “divinely chosen.” It is not uncommon for certain nations to see themselves as divinely superior. For example, China sees itself as

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\item \textsuperscript{26} Tamez, “God’s Election: Romans 9-11,” 29-30.
\item \textsuperscript{27} Cf. ibid., 33.
\item \textsuperscript{28} God warns and exhorts His people in His law to pay special attention to aliens in the midst of Israel under normal circumstances. “Do not mistreat an alien or oppress him, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt” (Ex. 22:21; cf. 23:9). God charges His people in Leviticus 19:34: “The alien living with you must be treated as one of your native-born. Love him as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God.” God also warns His chosen people against any forms of injustice against the aliens, orphans and widows (Jer. 7:6; Ezek. 22:7 and Mal. 3:5). As for the difficult questions surrounding the conquest of Canaan, Nehemiah’s and Malachi’s rejection of foreign spouses—all of which were demanded by God on the basis of Israel’s divine election—we need to understand them not as political dominion. Rather, these instructions were given as a prevention of or correction for Judah’s unfaithfulness to God, particularly in committing abomination by worshipping detestable idols and profaning the holiness of God, insofar as men were divorcing their covenanted wives and marrying the daughters of foreign gods (Gen. 15:16; Deut. 9:4-5; Neh. 13:26-27; Mal. 2:11, 14).
\item \textsuperscript{29} Tamez, “God’s Election: Romans 9-11,” 32.
\item \textsuperscript{30} Such as Africa, China, India, and the Southeast Asian nations, from the time of the European expeditions in the sixteenth century onward (cf. note 4 of this chapter).
\item \textsuperscript{31} Examples include the Americas, Australia and New Zealand.
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“Shen-Zhou,” God’s land or country; and Japan views itself as “Shen-Guo,” divine nation. Even the Aztec empire considered itself to be the people chosen to save humanity from the destruction of the sun. Under this belief, the subjection of other people groups around them was justified.\textsuperscript{32}

The ironic archetype of election without the cross is demonstrated by the chosen Israel who rejected the Elect Christ and crucified Him on the cross. However, it was through their rejection and forsakenness that Christ, who suffered at the hands of the chosen Israel, puts an end to rejection and forsakenness through the cross. God chooses the marginalized: aliens, orphans and widows, the oppressed, the hungry, the prisoners, the blind, the sick and naked (Ps. 146:7-9, Lk. 4:17-19; Matt. 25:34-36) and even the sinners (Lk. 5:32) to be the object of His mercy so that they might be delivered from the rejection and forsakenness of such false notions of election without the cross. The cross of Christ speaks of a mission to bring God’s mercy of redemption to all who have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23), as well as God’s compassion in deliverance from all forms of injustice and wickedness (Rom. 6:13). A sense of election without the cross tends to negate the responsibility of the chosen and the existential purposes of election; it shifts its focus to the “subjective doctrine” of predestination, to the exclusion and forsakenness of the marginalized and the sinners. When the “chosen” people no longer take up the cross and follow Christ, the warning of Paul in his parable of the olive tree (Rom. 11:17-24) needs to be remembered: the election will be withheld\textsuperscript{33} until they return to the cross and make God’s mercy visible.\textsuperscript{34}

The cross is decreed precisely so that God’s pro nobis intent reaches all nations and all people alike. The cross is visibly planted on Calvary so that God’s merciful plan for the

\textsuperscript{32} Tamez, “God’s Election: Romans 9-11,” 32-33.
\textsuperscript{33} Ἀποβολή αὐτῶν, “their rejection or repudiation” (Rom. 11:15); ἔξεκλασθησαν, “were broken off” (11:17).
\textsuperscript{34} Tamez, “God’s Election: Romans 9-11,” 34.
Buddhist, the Hindu, the Muslim, the Shintoist, and the Sikh may be proclaimed. The cross is fully participated in by the Trinitarian God so that the multitude of the powerless, the ungodly, the sinners, and God’s enemies (Rom. 5:6-10) may be invited to receive reconciliation through the election of Christ’s death on the cross (Rom. 5:10, 12).

By contrast, without the cross, the theology of election is prone to neglect the wideness of God’s mercy. Paul corrects such a deviation in Israel’s concept of God (Rom. 10:6-11), which is contrary to the emphasis of God’s covenantal faithfulness (Rom. 9:24-26; 10:11, cf. Isa. 28:16, I Pet. 2:6) in love through the cross of Christ. As Luther records, Staupitz once comforted him in his consternation over the doctrine of predestination, as Staupitz admonished Luther to contemplate Christ and His cross.  

Without the eminence of the cross, the doctrine of predestination becomes preoccupied with the fate of the individual instead of the unbounded grace and works of the Trinitarian God on the cross of Jesus Christ. For Paul, the cross is not only the center of salvation history, but also the pivot upon which the purely human logic and discourse of election and predestination are “turned upside down.” On the other hand, the doctrine of predestination and the theology of the cross are both held together by Christ, for He is the Elect and the One who suffers on the cross, in its Trinitarian economy of loving the world.

**Cruciform Election**

How, then, can we sum up the correlation between election and the cross? While many theologians either defend the doctrine of election or advocate the cross as uncoupled realities, Paul exalts the centrality of the cross and the fulfillment of the election in Christ, which holds true for all believers alike, whether they be Jews or Gentiles. In other words, the

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35 *LW* 5:47.
doctrines of predestination (election and reprobation) and the theology of the cross are held together in Christ through His crucifixion. This is what I propose in speaking of a “cruciform election”. Cruciform election is the divine election with the cross, and it is shaped by the following parameters:

First, *divine election is the directive of the cross and the cross is the means by which divine election comes*. Jesus clearly announced to His disciples and the multitudes that travelled with Him that they should take up their cross and follow Him (Lk. 14:25-27). Prenter remarks: “the cross we are called to bear is in a mysterious way identical with the cross of Christ.” The cross that we bear is the ultimate sign of one who has truly accepted the call of divine election. The cross is both the emblem and the signpost of divine election. It is also the conduit and the course of action through which divine election is consummated. This means that divine election with the cross must bring about a new understanding of the doctrine of predestination. Predestination is not the election of an individual to salvation or the reprobation of the masses to eternal damnation, as taught in traditional and Reformed writings. Predestination, as viewed and understood through the cross and the New Testament usages of the term, stresses the atonement of Christ and the *how* (the means of election) that He willed to become available to each individual. Predestination means that when God from all eternity decided to acquit humanity at His own cost, He elected to give to the world His Son as the atoning sacrifice for their sins (Jn. 3:16; Rom. 3:25; 1 Jn. 2:2).

Divine election with the cross therefore sees a world of possibilities—a world in which the truth of redemption (Rom. 3:24) and justification through His resurrection (Rom.

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36 Prenter, *Luther’s Theology of the Cross*, 3.
37 Cf. Chapter 5 on the New Testament usage of foreknowledge and predestination (pp. 254-55), and on the biblical usage of the term reprobate (pp. 246-50).
38 *CD* II/2:167-68.
are promised to all who will believe and repent from their former folly and sinful ways of life (Acts 17:30; 26:20). It means a world of possibilities where the misery of oppression and estrangement, as well as the “hopelessness of lost horizons”\(^\text{39}\) will be encountered by the light of Christ piercing through the darkness, awaiting to be confronted by the coming justice of God (Isa. 9:2-7). Moreover, divine election with the cross speaks out against the power of the Law to accuse and condemn “sinners,” which is completely shattered under the cross of Jesus.\(^\text{40}\) Accordingly, the *company* of the cross with its election says: the more you are sick or unclean, an outcast or oppressed, and the deeper you plunge as a sinner or an enemy, the more you are attracted to Jesus. The *canopy* of the cross, which embraces oppressed humanity and rejected “sinners,” draws them before the divine mercy and sets before them renewal and living hope in the crucified Christ (Tit. 3:3-7, cf. 1 Cor. 6:9-11).

Second, *divine election and the election of the cross are both a Trinitarian event*. As aforementioned, election in Romans 9 has to be understood from a Trinitarian perspective.\(^\text{41}\) Predestination is the eternal decision of the Triune God when God in the immanent Trinity determined to reveal the Savior of humankind who will release humanity from the bondage of sin through the cross and effect human redemption through the atonement of the Son on that cross. The election plan in the immanent Trinity is executed and understood to be ongoing economically, as engaged in the salvation history of humanity. Prenter further develops this point: “The Holy Spirit, who conforms our faith and our whole life to the cross, does it by leading us to the Son, who effected our redemption with the Father, and thus to the Father, who in his providence has made us one with his crucified Son.”\(^\text{42}\) This is what the

\(^{40}\) Jennings, *Transforming Atonement*, 103.
\(^{41}\) Cf. Chapter 3, 154 ff.
\(^{42}\) Prenter, *Luther’s Theology of the Cross*, 13.
election of the cross means. Traditional distinctions tend to place the cross only in the
economy of salvation, and not within the life of the immanent Trinity. My suggestion is to
view the cross not as standing within the economic Trinity, but as standing at the ‘coinciding
union’ between the immanent and economic Trinity. The cross is never a dividing line, but a
connecting bridge, where the invisibilities of the immanent God become apparent to
humankind in the economic purpose of God’s election. Thus, God’s Trinitarian love for
His creation through reconciling election unto righteousness is fully made known in the event
of the cross. When one pursues divine righteousness by faith (Rom. 9:30-32), the definitive
act of the Trinity on the cross cleanses one’s conscience from deeds that lead to death (Rom.
3:23-26; 12:2; 15:16) and commences the work of sanctification (Rom. 6:6, 19; 8:29; 12:1-2;
15:16). When cruciform election is understood from this intricate Trinitarian operation—
God’s exceeding provision through Christ’s finished work and the Spirit’s comprehensive
ministry in the one who lives by faith (Rom. 1:16-17)—the security of one’s election is
ensured.

Third, divine election with the cross is perfected election. The cross not only puts
into effect the doctrine of election, but also makes the reality of its doctrine possible; for
election finds both its identity and application in the cross. This tenet is substantiated
through the writer of Hebrews: “In bringing many sons and daughters to glory, it was fitting
that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the author (ἀρχηγός,
pioneer) of their salvation perfect (τελειῶσαι, completed, fulfilled, brought to the end goal)
through suffering” (2:10). Without the cross, Christ would not be the perfect elected One (cf.
1:2-3; 7:27; 9:11-14, cf. Rom. 1:4). He was made perfect through suffering, not as though

43 Moltmann, Trinity, 160.
44 While an act of the immanent Trinity, the cross displays its form and active power within the economic
sphere for our sake.
He lacked anything in His deity, but insofar as His acquaintance with grief and sorrow enabled Him to experience the anguish of forsakenness as He bore the sin of many (Isa. 53:3-4, 12; Mk. 14:34) in order to provide purification of sins (Heb. 1:3). He was made perfect through suffering on the cross, whereby He is perfectly qualified to be the elected pro nobis mediator between God and humanity. Christ’s mediation is made perfect through the voluntary sacrifice of His sinless body once for all (Heb. 10:10), thereby consecrating (τετελειωμένον, cf. Heb. 7:28, KJV) those who are sanctified through election\(^{45}\) (Heb. 10:14).

Without the cross, there is no surety (ἐγγυος, guarantor) of election. Jesus, the Elect, is the One who gives the certainty of a better covenant of election (Heb. 7:22, 28), which is the new covenant enacted purely through the shed blood of the Elect’s sacrifice on the cross. The pro nobis pursuit of God is made certain and set forth (προτίθημι, Rom. 3:25, or purposed, cf. Eph. 1:9) by God in Christ alone, not based on what we have done at all. The surety of Christ’s covenant in its election is established because of God’s oath (Heb. 7:22) in declaring it as an everlasting covenant (Heb. 13:20), which provides eternal redemption and cannot be changed or dissolved. The writer of Hebrews asserts further that the old covenant was put into effect only with blood (9:18). Thus, the eternal covenant of Christ in its election is in force only because of the blood of Christ shed on the cross. Therefore, without the cross, the covenant of election will not be in effect. “In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness” (Heb. 9:22). If the first covenant was established by the shed blood of bulls and goats, how much more sufficient should the perfect blood-sacrifice of Christ be in its ultimate cleansing? The writer of Hebrews repeatedly emphasizes that the offering of Christ

\(^{45}\) The cross is historically and divinely efficacious not only for election but also for sanctification.
is greater than and superior to the Levitical sacrifices in that it is decreed, divinely incarnate, eternal, voluntary, perfect, and all-sufficient. Unquestionably, if there is no cross, there is no efficacy in the blood of Christ. If there is no shed blood of Christ, there is no forgiveness of sin, and thereby no purpose for election.

Fourth, *divine election with the cross destroys all barriers*. Specifically, Paul argues through Romans 1 to 3 that all of humanity was an accomplice to sin and was under its bondage. The same humanity is given the gospel of reconciliation through the revelation of God’s mercy on the cross (Rom. 5:1, 11). When election is interpreted within God’s pursuit of mercy, all pride must be set aside and self-righteousness be destroyed at the foot of the cross.46 By a lack of humility and the mercy of the cross, the theology of election is distorted and the doctrine of predestination is thus misrepresented.

This reorientation of predestination guards against the narcissistic culture that has often infiltrated ecclesiastical society, which focuses on individual privilege rather than those outside the grace of the crucified God. Therefore, Barth cautions against the impending danger of dichotomizing divine predestination, dividing it between those who are saved and those who are just plain damned.47 The precept of cruciform election needs to be understood within God’s merciful plan, in which God does not want anyone to perish, but wills that all should come to repentance (2 Pet. 3:9). Thus, the opportunity of turning the sinner (ἁµαρτωλός) “from the error of his way” (Jas. 5:20) is commended to the elect community, namely the duty of loving their neighbor enough to confront them, which would bring the blessings of turning them from death and also cover a multitude of sins. Concordantly, as recorded in the four Gospels, those who were despised and excluded by society, the outcasts

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46 Romans 11 warns the arrogant and self-righteous of the danger of being “cut off” from God’s election (11:20-22).
47 CD II/2:415-16.
and the sinners, were the objects of Christ’s mercy and forgiveness through His cross. Gorman comments: “For the God of the cross of Christ, no life is expendable; even the enemy is loved by God, who willed and wills the reconciliation of the world through the cross.” On the other hand, election without the cross is like the case of the Pharisee in Luke 18:10-12. The Pharisee not only did not pray for the restoration of sinners, but stood audaciously before God and arrogantly bragged about himself being unlike the robbers, evildoers, and adulterers, despising their immoral life. Condescendingly, he mocked the tax collector standing at a distance and praying in humble repentance, who sought God’s mercy to cover his sins through Christ’s atonement (ιλάσκομαι, Lk. 18:13, cf. Rom. 3:25 and Heb. 2:17).

Furthermore, cruciform election is the breaking down of the barrier of exclusionism. Notably, God often chooses those people deemed as the least in the world and the most oppressed to be the witness of His merciful plan. Romans 16 gives a list of the members in the church in the city of Rome. Out of the twenty-four names given, more than half are considered to be slaves. Tamez remarks: “God chooses the least ones, those who are excluded, the oppressed people, to give witness to God’s love and power. God’s choice — election — of those who are excluded occurs so that they also may be included as heirs to the kingdom. To choose those who are excluded is a guarantee for all to form part of God’s people.” Cruciform election puts an end to exclusion as Christ the Elect was “excluded” through the shame of the cross in order to put an end to the exclusion of election without the cross.

49 Barclay, Romans, 212.
Fifth, *divine election with the cross dwells not on privileges, but rather on the existential purpose for such an election of grace.* When God established His election through the means of the cross, He advanced His divine election through the elect who were willing to take up their own cross to follow Him. Cruciform election does not dwell on the destiny but the mission of the individuals as a channel of God’s mercy for the sinful and broken world. The way of the cross through *theologia crucis* changes our concept of God’s purpose in election from destiny to dependability, as the witness of the cross of Christ is characterized by self-sacrificing love and service, and it embraces the offender with mercy and hope. The elect know themselves to be the messengers who bring light and healing to the darkness of the world. As light-bearers, the elect may portray the healing grace of God in the midst of the suffering world.

In the cross we know first and foremost *Deus pro nobis.* God for us not only calls us to Himself through the cross but also sends us from the Trinitarian event of the cross to participate in the existential purpose of His election of grace, which is marked by justice for the marginalized and the underprivileged. The elect who have been justified through the imputation of Christ’s righteousness (Rom. 4:22-24) of His cross also bear the responsibility to seek liberation for the poor and the exploited. Scriptures in both the Old and New Testaments repeatedly charged the “chosen” Israel and the disciples to be mindful of this task, because God for us feels the suffering of human beings. Given the visibility and importance of the poor and the oppressed in Scripture and in the ministries of Jesus and His

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51 Gorman, *Cruciformity,* 376.
52 Deut. 14:29, Ps. 82:3; Prov. 31:9; Isa. 1:17; 56:1; 58:6; Jer. 21:12; 22:3; 35:15; Ezek. 18:31; and Zeph. 2:3. We see the ministry of Jesus to the outcast, the sick and the poor throughout the Gospels. Furthermore, in the Epistles: Rom. 12:13-16; 15:25-26; 2 Cor. 8:1-15; Gal. 2:10; Eph. 4:28; and Jas. 1:27.
53 Gorman, *Cruciformity,* 376. Cf. also Gen. 16:11, 13; Ex. 3:7-8; Deut. 26:7; Ps. 34:19; 46:1; 147:3; Isa. 53:3; 63:8-9; 65:2; Matt. 23:37; Rom. 8:26, 35-39; 2 Cor. 1:3-4.
apostles, the elect communities need to stretch their hearts’ capacity to remember the poor and the broken people as part of their witness of God’s merciful dealing with the world.

Abiding concern for the poor and the weak was at the forefront of the good news proclaimed by Jesus (Lk. 4:18). He highlights “the poor” (οἱ πτωχοὶ, the destitute) in describing an elect person’s confession of his or her spiritual condition, which is abject poverty before God. This spiritual attitude is to be the foremost indication of one who not only deserves the kingdom of heaven, but also becomes the channel to bring the kingdom of heaven to earth. One of the biblical examples is Ruth, the Moabite, who became one of the ancestors of Christ. James, the brother of Jesus, along with Peter and John, chosen as representatives of the Jerusalem council, stipulated that Paul and Barnabas should continue to remember the poor, both in Jerusalem and among the Gentile communities (Gal. 2:8-10). Paul notes that the inculcation of remembrance for the poor was precisely what he was eager to do in his ministry (v.10). That is why in his epistle of Romans 12:13, Paul continues this instruction to the elect community in Rome, whom he has not visited yet, to be mindful also in caring for the poor and the lowly. These would include widows, orphans, and aliens with material needs such as food, clothing and shelter, as well as strangers. Paul returns in Romans 12:16 to highlight his exhortation for the elect not to be ashamed in associating or accommodating (συναπάγω, to lead away together with) those people of lowly estate. Here

54 For a more extensive discussion of this topic, please refer to Bruce W. Longenecker, “Good News to the Poor: Jesus, Paul, and Jerusalem,” in Jesus and Paul Reconnected: Fresh Pathways into an Old Debate, ed. Todd D. Still (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publ. Co., 2007).
55 Most read “the poor” in Gal. 2:10 as referring to the poor saints in Jerusalem. However, it seems uncharacteristic of Paul that he would exhort the Galatians here with this exclusive view of the poor. The commitment to the poor in general is integral to Paul’s message in his epistles (Rom. 12:13; 1 Cor. 13:3; 2 Cor. 8:9; Eph. 4:28; 2 Tim. 6:18).
56 Literally, fellowshipping (κοινωνοῦντες) or associating in sharing one’s life. It implies communicating not just with words but also with deeds (Jas. 2:15-16; 1 Jn. 3:17-18).
57 Poor (ἁπάντας) in verse13 and people of low estate (ταπεινότας) in verse16.
58 Dunn, Romans, 743.
59 Moo, Romans, 779.
is a word picture of tender compassion—staying with and leading those of lowly estate until they are out of their situation. Paul admonishes that exercising such compassion is in agreement with and worthy of our cruciform election (Eph. 4:1; cf. Rom. 8:28).

**Conclusion**

Cruciform election is of the essence in explicating the purpose of God according to election in Romans 9:11. Such conformity also accentuates the need to reevaluate the Reformed doctrine of predestination through the theology of the cross of Christ from a Trinitarian perspective. From the perspective of the cross, predestination is chiefly presented as the eternal decision of God, vested in the immanent Trinity. Christ is elected to accomplish human salvation through the atonement of the cross,\(^61\) in order that God’s existential purpose of election might be revealed to the elect community. The aforementioned five parameters of cruciform election constitute the general truth that the cross is the concrete evidence of election truly promised by God. He perfected the election of grace through the Trinitarian event of the cross “in order that God’s purpose of election might stand” (Rom. 9:11). The moment that the cross is ignored, election becomes just a matter of knowledge. The cross is therefore the “inseparable companion” of election. When the cross is taken away, no matter how eloquent the discourse on the subject of election becomes, it will have no persuasive power. It is through the cross that the elect are challenged to follow the Elect; no path of election can make a detour around it.\(^62\) Hence, our theology of election must develop along the trajectory of the cross.

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\(^61\) Thus any human merits and works are excluded (Rom. 9:12).  
\(^62\) Balthasar observes: “It is to the Cross that the Christian is challenged to follow his Master; no path of redemption can make a detour around it.” See Balthasar, *Unless You Become Like This Child*, trans. Erasmo Leiva-Merikakis (SF: Ignatius Press, 1991), 57.
A misconstrued election is an election of humanity without the cross, which has absolutely no power to achieve righteousness (Rom. 3:21-23; I Pet. 2:24). Equally, a misrepresented cross is a cross without the election of Christ, which has absolutely no power to achieve justification (Rom. 3:24-26; 5:9; Gal. 2:16, cf. Acts 13:39). The prophetic calling and choice of predestination does not focus on individual destiny. Rather, the prophetic choice of election is the choosing of Christ: “This is the Lamb of God, trust in Him.” He is the chief cornerstone of predestination (1 Pet. 2: 4, 6). The prophetic calling of predestination is: “This is the way of the cross, walk in it.” Such is the existential purpose of election. God does not wish that any should perish through reprobation.

Revelation tells us that the elect will sing a particular anthem in eternity. Before the throne in heaven, the apostle John “saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the center of the throne,” (Rev. 5:6) encircled by a great multitude of angels. The redeemed elect from every nation, tribe, people and language (Rev. 7:9) all join together before the throne in worship of the Lamb, singing:

You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth . . . Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise . . . To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever.\textsuperscript{63}

\textit{Crux probat omnia}\textsuperscript{64}

\textsuperscript{63} Rev. 5:9-14.
\textsuperscript{64} Luther, \textit{WA} 5.179.
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