

ISRAEL AND PREDESTINATION: ROMANS 9:1-29

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Introduction

For eight years, I claimed the title *Reformed* before rejecting many of its tenets. During that time, I sought to maintain the Reformed heritage in all matters of Soteriology. As a result, I adhered to what is known as *The Doctrine of Predestination*.

The Doctrine of Predestination essentially teaches that from all eternity, God chose a people for himself whom he would actively save in the outworking of history, but at the same time, he chose not to redeem, a certain remaining number of mankind, thus handing them over to their sinful state, and reprobating them to the consequences of their sin and a punishment of an eternal hell.

The Doctrine of Predestination is based on many New Testament passages, such as, but not limited to: Romans 8:29-30, Romans 9:1-33, Jude 4 and Ephesians 1:11-12. These verses are essential to those who hold this view. They are adhered to by, but not limited to the majority of Reformed churches.

This doctrine is comprised of two sub-doctrines: *Election* and *Reprobation*. According to Louis Berkhof, election is "that eternal act of God whereby He, in His sovereign good pleasure, and on the account of no foreseen merit in them, chooses a certain number of men to be the recipients of special grace and of eternal salvation."¹ Likewise, according to Louis Berkhof, "reprobation [aka: Double Predestination] may be defined as that eternal decree of God whereby He has determined to pass some men by with the operations of His special grace, and to punish them for their sins, to the

¹ Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology: The Doctrine of God*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing), p. 114.

manifestation of His Justice."² This doctrine is also sometimes referred to as *Preterition*, which simply means that God "passed over" certain individuals without any action from man, thus leaving them to suffer the consequences of their own sin.

It is important to note from the outset, that the Doctrine of Predestination has been built on the Old Testament foundation of God's election for Israel. On this point, there is unanimous agreement between both theological and historical scholars. As we shall see, this will become paramount to our exegesis of Romans chapter nine; and likewise, will be instrumental in showing that predestination was a concept that only applied to Israel.

A Brief History of Predestination

Before I begin an exegesis of Romans chapter nine, it is important to first give a brief history of Predestination. Again, it should be noted from the outset, that this is abridged. Therefore, it might seem as if I am making some generalizations, since I will most certainly fail to distinguish between different forms of the doctrine, as believed by every historical predestinarian theologian. However, I assure you it is not my intention to misrepresent the different views. Likewise, in this paper, it is not my intention to give a detailed history of Predestination in its different forms; such a venture would result in a large volume of books. Regardless, I believe it is always a good idea to examine the subject in light of the history of Christianity; thus, bringing into fuller light, how it came to be such a contentious issue within Protestant Christianity.

² Ibid., *Part One: The Doctrine of God*. p. 116.

Augustine and Pelagius

Augustine provided a model for Christian theology, which has been mimicked by Protestant Christian thought ever since. His influence upon Protestant theology cannot be argued.

"Augustine is the end of one era as well as the beginning of another. He is the last of the ancient Christian writers, and the forerunner of medieval theology. The main currents of ancient theology converged in him, and from him flow the rivers, not only of medieval scholasticism, but also of sixteenth-century Protestant theology."³

Unanimous agreement exist between most scholars that Augustine was the first to "develop" predestination, by way of his argument against Pelagius, whom he accused of teaching salvation by human will.

Of course, there were a few Church fathers before Augustine, who taught the need for reliance on God's grace, but for the most part, soteriology before Augustine seemed to presume the view known as synergism, i.e., the idea that man's will works in conjunction with God's spirit for regeneration; it is a cooperative venture, a working together of two or more parties. However, from Augustine came the opposing idea of Monergism, i.e., "the idea and belief that human agency is entirely passive and God's agency is all determining in both universal history and individual salvation."⁴

According to Dr. Olson, early on in Augustine's life, "he defended a libertarian idea of human freedom against the deterministic Manichaeans....then, Augustine

³ Quoted in Olson, p. 256. Justo L. González. *A History of Christian Thought. Rev. ed.* (Nashville TN: Abingdon press, 1987), p.15.

⁴ Roger E. Olson. *The Story of Christian Theology: Twenty Centuries of Tradition & Reform.* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1999), pp. 254-256.

believed, humans did have freewill”⁵ However, in a later debate with Pelagius, “he changed his mind and began to interpret human freedom as the ability to sin apart from God’s transforming grace.”⁶ Early on, “Augustine considered faith the human person’s contribution to salvation-a synergistic idea....later, in reaction to Pelagius, he came to regard his faith as a gift of God-an idea more compatible with Monergism.”⁷

Pelagius denied Augustine's idea of Monergism. His denial can be summed up as follows, "God's word and our own conscience is all that we need. Any baptized Christian can simply choose to follow God's will all of the time and never need any further special enabling from God to live sinlessly."⁸ The debate between Pelagius and Augustine, which included original sin [hereditary guilt], free will and grace, helped to shape Augustine’s view of Predestination. It is this “river of theology,” which birthed an argument among the Protestant churches that has continued to this day.

Whatever the case, it is evident from Augustine’s final work, *On the Predestination of the Saints*, that his interpretations concerning this doctrine came mainly from Romans nine. In fact, according to Olson, the impression left on Augustine by "his own experience of conversion was so overwhelming that he could not really resist it. He did not choose God; God chose him....this was confirmed by the apostle Paul's teaching in passages such as Romans 9-11."⁹

As we can see, Augustine’s thinking was shaped by theological wars of the

⁵ Ibid., p. 260; 264.

⁶ Ibid., p. 260.

⁷ Ibid., p. 260.

⁸ Ibid., p. 269.

⁹ Ibid., p. 266.

moment; his constant revisions are evidence that he had no more theological clarity, than we do today. Theology then, was just as speculative in nature as today; a problem, in my opinion, best solved by way of the historical approach. Augustine's view of these verses was individualistic in nature and was strictly fixated on individual salvation. His ideas are what provided a foundation for Martin Luther, John Calvin and others to follow.

At the end of the day, Augustine's conclusion was that salvation was the sole work of God and that humans play absolutely no role in their own salvation. If they are saved it is because God chose them and gave them the gifts of faith and grace; no work of their own is necessary to receive it. Pelagius on the other hand, believed in the necessity of human contribution to the matter.

John Cassian and Semi-Pelagianism

In 341, the council of Ephesus condemned Pelagius' view. However, they also did not accept Augustine's view either. This led to John Cassian's efforts to create what he saw as a balance between the two. Cassian taught that, "a human being can only be saved by God through grace, but that such salvation could begin with the initiative of a good will toward God in the human heart. Their [his] view of the beginning of salvation can be summed up by the expression, "God helps those who help themselves.""¹⁰ This view came to be known as Semi-Pelagianism. It was ultimately condemned by the Synod of Orange in 529, because they believed it to be similar to Pelagianism.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 280.

Martin Luther and Desiderius Erasmus

The idea, “what role humans play in their own salvation,” would once again take center stage with Desiderius Erasmus and Martin Luther. During the reformation, Martin Luther used Predestination against Erasmus, whom he accused of Semi-Pelagianism.

In 1524, Erasmus offered an assessment of Luther's, *On Freedom of the Will*. “Erasmus considered strict Monergism incompatible with reasonable Christianity and argued for the human person's freedom to choose or reject God's grace.”¹¹ Luther however, believed the "North African Church Father [Augustine, to be] correct on this matter, because he agreed with Paul in Romans 9-11.”¹² At the end of the day, Erasmus believed in a kind of synergistic grace, which was met by Luther with accusations of Semi-Pelagianism. It is important to note, that Luther's view of Predestination was the result of Augustine's interpretation of Romans 9-11.

Ulrich Zwingli

Ulrich Zwingli, who has been called, "the true father of Reformed Theology,"¹³ taught Predestination as part of God's ultimate sovereignty and providence. In his book, *On Providence of God*, Zwingli argued for God's providential rule over all things. He writes, "I define Providence as the rule over and direction of all things in the universe. For if anything were guided by its own power or insight, just so far would the wisdom and power of our deity be deficient.”¹⁴ According to Olson, "For Zwingli, Predestination

¹¹ Ibid., p. 365.

¹² Ibid., p. 365.

¹³ Ibid., p. 399.

¹⁴ Ulrich Zwingli, *On Providence and Other Essays*. (Durham, N.C.: Labyrinth Press, 1983), p. 130.

was both a biblical doctrine and the only view of God's role in salvation consistent with the rationally deduced doctrine of providence....Zwingli did not hesitate to affirm that those individuals who end up damned forever in hell are also eternally determined by God for that fate."¹⁵

Jean Calvin

Jean Calvin argued for the Reformed Tradition that was soon to be birthed, which emphasized these doctrines in the life of "individual elect" as an assurance to their salvation. Luther and Zwingli influenced him heavily. "Calvin's doctrine of God was thoroughly Augustinian....like Augustine, Luther and Zwingli, he viewed God as the all-determining reality and taught God's meticulous providence over nature and history."¹⁶ Calvin wrote, "God by the bridle of his providence turns every event whatever way he wills."¹⁷ Clearly, Calvin taught Double Predestination and Reprobation, "God is said to have ordained from eternity those whom he wills to embrace in love, and those upon whom he wills to vent his wrath."¹⁸ "No one who wishes to be thought religious dares simply deny predestination, by which God adopts some to hope of life, and sentences others to eternal death."¹⁹ If you read book three, chapter 21, in *Calvin's Institutes* you will find that Romans chapter nine is the principle text used by Calvin, to justify the

¹⁵ Roger Olson, Roger E. Olson. *The Story of Christian Theology: Twenty Centuries of Tradition & Reform*. (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1999), p. 403.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 410.

¹⁷ Jean Calvin, Ford Lewis Battles, and John Thomas MacNeill. Vol. I. *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960.), 1.16.9.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, vol. II, 3.24.17.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, vol. II, 3.21.5.

Doctrine of Predestination. Calvin did more to systemize the doctrine than any prior theologian up to his time.

Theodore Beza and Jacob Arminius

It is often thought that Jean Calvin invented the system known as Calvinism. This has led many a layperson to imagine some big debate between Arminius and Calvin, but this is not true. In fact, contrary to popular belief, when Calvin died in 1564; Jacob Arminius was only four years old. So the idea that Calvin and Arminius fought over these things is wrong. Those who say such things often do not have the proper historical context.

Upon Calvin's death, Theodore Beza became his successor in Geneva. Thus "the full weight of Calvin's responsibility came upon Beza. Beza was the head of the [Genevan] academy, a teacher there, moderator of the company of pastors, a powerful influence with the magistrates of Geneva, and the spokesman and defender of the Reformed protestant position."²⁰

"Theodore Beza is best known as the founder of an extreme type of Calvinist theology known as supralapsarianism."²¹ It is a *type* of Calvinist theology, because Beza saw it as the logical end of Calvin's doctrines; in essence, it was an extension. However, I should mention, there has been much debate as to whether Calvin would have approved of supralapsarianism. Beza believed that "God's decrees of election and reprobation

²⁰ Robert Schnucker, *Theodore Beza in the New Testament International Dictionary of the Christian Church* (Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996.), p. 126.

²¹ Roger Olson, *The Story of Christian Theology: Twenty Centuries of Tradition and Reform* (Leicester: InterVarsity Press 1999), p. 456.

preceded God's decree of creation and permission of the fall."²² In other words, supralapsarianism is the idea that predestination precedes creation in the purpose of God.

Jacob Arminius, who had studied at the Genevan Academy under Beza, over the course of time, gained quite the scholarly reputation in Leiden, and thus, was given the responsibility of preparing a defense of his former teacher's [Beza] view on "supralapsarianism." In the process of preparing that defense, he became convinced of the opposite position. James Strong and John McClintock records,

"In 1589 Theodore Koornhert, of Amsterdam, published several works, in which he attacked the doctrine of predestination, which was taught by Beza and the Genevan school. To obviate Koornhert's objections, some ministers of Delft proposed a change in Beza's doctrine. They agreed with Beza that divine predestination was the antecedent, unconditional, and immutable decree of God concerning the salvation or damnation of each individual; but whereas Beza represented that man, not considered as fallen, or even as created, was the object of this unconditional decree, the ministers of Delft made this peremptory decree subordinate to the creation and fall of man; that is to say, they adopted sublapsarianism in place of the supralapsarianism of Calvin and Beza. They thought this hypothesis would do away with Koornhert's objection that the doctrine of absolute decrees represented God as the author of sin-as such decrees made sin necessary and inevitable no less than damnation. Their view was published under the title *Responsio ad argumenta quaedam Bez, et Caklni, ex tractatu de Preadestinatione, in Cap. IX ad Romanos*. The book was sent to Lydius, professor at Franeker, who requested Arminius to answer it. He consented; but in studying the subject he began to doubt which of the two views to adopt, and at length became inclined to embrace the doctrine which he had undertaken to refute."²³

Additionally, "in the course of a series of sermons on Paul's Epistle to the Romans, the young preacher openly began to contradict not only supralapsarianism, but

²² Donald K. McKim, *The Westminster Handbook to Reformed Theology*. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press), p. 180.

²³ James Strong and John McClintock, *Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological and Ecclesiastical Literature*, Vol. 1, under Arminianism (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1981), p. 413.

unconditional election and irresistible grace as well."²⁴

It was not long before Arminius was accused of heresy. As a result, church officials looked into the matter and actually cleared Arminius of all charges. As a result, Arminius' supralapsarian and university colleague, Franciscus Gomarius, immediately launched an accusation war saying, "he was a secret sympathizer with the Jesuits."²⁵ This conflict eventually gave rise to a division affecting the whole church of Holland. Thus, the Amsterdam Consistory "ordered them to cease all controversy until a general synod could be summoned to determine the subject of the dispute."²⁶

There should be no doubt that Beza's form of predestination was the logical end of Calvin's doctrines. It relied heavily on Paul's writing in Romans chapter nine. Additionally, it should be noted that it was a series of sermons on Paul's Epistle to the Romans that led Arminius to dispute Beza's ideas of supralapsarianism, unconditional election and irresistible grace. In both cases, the book of Romans was at the center of the debate.

The Remonstrants and Synod of Dort

It was those that came after John Calvin that actually systematized Calvinism into its common five points. In fact, it was also those who came after Arminius. Calvinism was systematized, as a result of the controversy surrounding the Synod of Dort in 1618 and 1619. The Synod of Dort was a national synod held by the Dutch Reformed Church, in order to settle somber dissension in the churches that came about because of the rise of

²⁴ Roger E. Olson. *The Story of Christian Theology: Twenty Centuries of Tradition & Reform*. (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1999), p. 462.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 462.

²⁶ James Strong and John McClintock, *Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological and Ecclesiastical Literature*, Vol. 1, under Arminianism (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1981), p. 414.

Arminianism.

By the time Arminius died in 1609, his views had been spread widely through out the Netherlands and after his death the debate began to intensify largely due to a group of Arminius' followers known as the *Remonstrants*, named so because they presented a petition to the State of Holland, which was called a *Remonstrance*. The Remonstrants formed a series of statements that were their objections to Calvinism, which became known as Arminianism. Here is a brief summary of their statements:

1. God elects on the basis of foreseen faith, i.e., what he knows will happen.
2. Believes that Christ died for every man though only believers will be saved.
3. Man is not so corrupted by sin that he cannot believe the gospel when it is put before him, i.e., a denial of Total Depravity.
4. Believe that God's saving grace can be resisted.
5. Believe that those in Christ can fall away from the truth.

After seven months of sessions, the Synod of Dort rejected the Remonstrant Articles and published their own views, which would later, become known as the five points of Calvinism and by the acronym T.U.L.I.P. Here is a quick summary of those:

1. Unconditional Election - Election is the unchangeable purpose of God whereby before the foundation of the world, by his mere grace, according to the sovereign good pleasure of his will, he chose in Christ to salvation a definite number of particular people out of the entire human race.
2. Limited Atonement - The death of Christ is of infinite worth and value abundantly sufficient for the sins of the whole world, but it extends only to the elect chosen from eternity.
3. Total Depravity - Man was originally created upright, but because of the fall all men are conceived in sin and by nature are children of wrath; thus, totally incapable of any saving good, prone to evil, dead in sin, and in bondage thereto, and without the regenerating grace of the Holy Spirit they are neither able or willing to return to God on their own.

4. Irresistible Grace - those, whom God chose from eternity in Christ, he calls effectually in time and confers upon them the gifts of faith and repentance, rescues them from the powers of darkness and translates them into the kingdom of His own dear son. And this effectual call cannot be resisted.

5. Perseverance of the Saints - Those whom God effectually calls do not fall from grace and though they might temporarily fall into backslidings they will persevere until the end.²⁷

These five points [T.U.L.I.P.] have done more to define the Doctrine of Predestination than any theologian in history. The Remonstrant Controversy had an exegesis of Romans chapters 9-11, exegeted ultimately by Calvin himself, to thank for its genesis.

The Puritans, Presbyterians and the Westminster Confession

The Puritans ultimately received their theological beginnings from Jean Calvin and the Genevan Reformation. They were initially "English Calvinist who hoped to turn the entire Church of England into a Presbyterian national church-like Scotland's-and all of England into a Christian commonwealth modeled after Geneva."²⁸ They sought to purify [thus their name] the Church of England from what they saw as "Romanish" ways of thinking.

Eventually, through the process of time and different circumstances, came the Westminster Confession, the achievement of the Westminster Assembly, which was comprised of a synod of 151 Puritan and Presbyterian leaders.

The Westminster Confession thoroughly teaches predestination. It emphasizes the

²⁷ T.U.L.I.P taken from: Henry Petersen. *The Canons of Dort; a Study Guide*. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1968).

²⁸ Roger E. Olson. *The Story of Christian Theology: Twenty Centuries of Tradition & Reform*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1999. p. 496.

"absolute sovereignty of God, God's eternal decrees of election and reprobation (damnation), and humans' total depravity and complete dependence on God's grace."²⁹

The Westminster Confession, which is commonly adhered to in most Presbyterian and other Reformed churches, declares,

“The rest of mankind [non-elect] God was pleased, according to the unsearchable counsel of His own will, whereby He extends or withholds mercy, as He pleases, for the glory of His sovereign power over His creatures, to pass by; and to ordain them to dishonor and wrath for their sin, to the praise of His glorious justice.”³⁰

Furthermore, chapter 10 of the Confession is entitled "Concerning Effectual Calling". The first sentence of that chapter states,

"All those whom God hath predestinated unto life, and those only, He is pleased, in His appointed and accepted time, effectually to call, by His word and Spirit, out of that state of sin and death, in which they are by nature to grace and salvation, by Jesus Christ; enlightening their minds spiritually and savingly to understand the things of God, taking away their heart of stone, and giving unto them an heart of flesh; renewing their wills, and, by His almighty power, determining them to that which is good, and effectually drawing them to Jesus Christ: yet so, as they come most freely, being made willing by His grace."³¹

It should be noted that the majority of Reformed and Presbyterian churches place their reliance upon the Westminster Confession of Faith to provide the doctrines that are the foundational beliefs of their churches. These confessional doctrines are not believed to be solo error free, but are believed infallible, because they are seen as the doctrines

²⁹ Ibid., p. 497.

³⁰ Westminster Confession of Faith, *Of God's Eternal Decree*, (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 2000), Chapter III; VII.

³¹ Ibid., Chapter X:I.

taught in the scriptures that come from God. It is important to note, because speaking against the creeds or confessions, is equated with speaking against established orthodoxy; thus, making one a heretic.

The interpretation of the confession writers followed along the lines of Augustine, in that, it was fixated on individualistic interpretation and salvation. The Reformed and Presbyterian churches that have stemmed from the confessions do the same, which is how they deduce the Doctrine of Predestination.

A Few More Theologians and Concluding Thoughts on Predestination History

There are more predestinarian theologians we could mention: Jonathan Edwards, Francis Turretin, Charles Hodge, Karl Barth, Cornelius Van Til, Alvin Plantinga, Louis Berkhof, Lorraine Boettner and Gordon Clark-to name a few. However, as I said earlier, to give a detailed history of Predestination as believed in the last two thousand years of Christianity by every theologian, would result in a large volume of books. Instead, what I have tried to do in this section is to highlight significant points in history where predestination was believed or rejected.

We should take note of three important facts from this synopsis: **1.** The common thread running through all theologians who believed in Predestination is a heavy reliance on Romans chapter nine for their interpretation, **2.** Their interpretations have compounded as they built upon prior theologians, and **3.** Their interpretations have always been individualistic in nature with very little or no regard for historical context.

Paul's Narrative in Historical Context: Covenant and Election in the First Century

Context

Richard B. Hays, George Washington Ivey Professor of New Testament at Duke Divinity School in Durham, North Carolina, writes:

"The mainstream Western Christian tradition running from Augustine through Luther (in its Protestant branch) to Bultmann has rendered a reading of Paul fixated on individual salvation, but it has been able to do so only by strenuously suppressing the voice of the Scripture in Paul's letters, stifling Paul's own claim to expound a gospel that underscores God's faithfulness to Israel."³²

In this quote, Dr. Hays has made my point. I contend that the focus on "individual salvation" has led to a fundamental misunderstanding of the Doctrine of Predestination. As we have seen historically, its arguments have been fixated on an individualistic interpretation with no regard to historical context. This method is sometimes referred to as the historical-critical approach, i.e., an approach that seeks to only uncover the original intensions of the authors.

The historical-critical approach is nothing new. It was brought to light first during the enlightenment by such scholars as: Hermann Reimarus and Albert Schweitzer. Such scholars as: Geza Vermes, N.T. Wright, E.P. Sanders, Bart Ehrman, and John P. Meier; propelled the idea into the future. The one unanimous thread found in their work is that they all emphasized Jesus in His Jewish context-

³² Richard Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul*. (Yale University Press, 1993), p. 159.

that is, they unanimously felt the need to stress placing Jesus within the first-century Judean culture. For them, the Jewishness of Jesus must be first and foremost in the reconstruction of His life and theology. I concur! Anytime one takes something out of context, lack of understanding often follows. Therefore, our search for the meaning of Paul's theology via Jesus' theology, must always begin in Jesus own world-that is, in His Jewish context. With this in mind, I shall show, when typical Calvinistic verses are interpreted according to this method a different picture emerges.³³

Covenant

The prevalent idea ascribed to by first-century Jews was the idea of covenant. They believed that they were the *elect* and *chosen* people of God who would eventually be the light of the whole world. After all, it was the Old Testament Prophets who had predicted that in the last days all nations would go up to Jerusalem to learn of the one true God (Is. 2:2; Zech. 14:16).

The idea of covenant was central to all Jews during this time. At the center of their worship was the idea that God and all Israel had entered into a special relationship. According to the covenant, Israel was to follow all the rules stated in the Torah. In return, God would be the God of Israel, promising to protect them, prosper them, and set them above all other nations. “And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe and to do all his commandments which I command thee this day, that the Lord thy God will set thee on high above all nations of

³³ For more detailed discussion on the importance of historical context please see the appendix entitled, *A Brief Note on the Hostility between History and Theology*, which is from a prior research paper entitled, *In Context: The Parable of the Wicked Husbandman*.

the earth.” (Deut. 28:1).

N.T. Wright has said concerning the idea of covenant within second-temple Judaism,

“We have now found that the set of *basic beliefs*, which explicate the entire worldview theologically, may be summarized quite simply as monotheism, **election** and eschatology. There is one creator god, who has chosen Israel to be his people, giving her his Torah and establishing her in his holy land. He will act for her and through her to re-establish his judgment and justice, his wisdom and his *shalom*, throughout the world.”³⁴

E.P. Sanders has also agreed that the covenantal idea was prevalent during second-temple Judaism. He opines,

“We can likewise see that Jesus accepted ‘covenantal nomism.’ His mission was to Israel in the name of the God of Israel, He thus evidently accepted His people’s special status, that is, the **election** and the covenant.”³⁵

It is from this understanding that we must approach Paul's epistle. Paul understood better than anybody, the mindset of his own people. To him, God had not [in totality] cast away His people [Israel] which He foreknew.” (Ro 11:2). Instead, he had preserved a remnant [of Israel] according to the election of grace.” (Ro 11:5). To Israel pertained the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises.

A Polemic Situation

³⁴ N.T. Wright, *The New Testament and The People of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), p. 279.

³⁵ E. P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (Fortress Press Philadelphia 1985), p. 336.

A point almost always missed by Christian interpreters, in Romans, is the fact that ethnic Israel is at the center of Paul's narrative. Therefore, I argue that there has been a complete failure to identify what Paul was trying to accomplish, in his letter.

Among the Gentile believers, questions concerning the future of Israel were reaching their boiling point. "To the Jew first and also to the Greek" (Ro 1:16b) was the theme of Paul's whole letter. Therefore, it is our opinion, that Paul wrote the letter to address these questions among the Gentiles, which pertained to Israel's Old Testament promises-made by the Prophets.

Over the course of time, these questions of the Gentiles were giving birth to a religious separatism that was becoming hostile to Paul's gospel. Many in the Church of Rome were saying, Israel was hardened, then rejected and finally, [completely] cut off. Thus, they believed God chose to show partiality toward them-the Gentiles (Ro 9-11).

However, Paul made it clear that this separatism was not to be the case, "thou [Gentiles] bearest not the root, but the root thee;" (Ro 11:18) a certain deflation of Gentile arrogance.

The future of the Gentiles did not lie in God's rejection of Israel. The Gentiles could not claim anything independent of Israel's promises. As a result, the Gentiles salvation was completely reliant on the fulfillment of Israel's promises. "Through their [Israel's] fall, salvation is come unto the Gentiles." (Ro 11:11). Paul had to make the Gentiles understand that their future was only found in the future of

Israel.

A Brief Note on Replacement Theology

It is important to recognize and elaborate on this earliest form of Replacement Theology.³⁶ I offer a point I recently wrote in another research paper,

“It is understood that the idea of Israel’s significance, in the first-century has often been minimized within the theological world, as many are happy to accept the idea that Paul uses Jewish analogies to refer to a spiritual Israel. They interpret Romans 2:28, 29 to mean, the “true Jews” are a new entity known as the church-made up of only gentiles. Beyond this, they assert that terms such as “twelve tribes” or “Israelites” in the New Testament indicate the figurative and or spiritual true Israel of God-that is, a new Gentile entity known as the church. This is an idea in which I am in total disagreement. I would earnestly contend that it is a mistake to buy into any form of Replacement Theology. Long after the cross, Paul is still concerned with the fulfillment of God’s promises to a believing remnant of Israel, ‘Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers.’ (Ro 15:8). It is better said that a believing remnant of Jews, along with believing Gentiles, became the church or new Israel of God. Believing Israel was still to have a full fulfillment of her promises and the Gentiles a part in it. In my opinion, it was not Paul’s intent in Romans, to teach some sort of Replacement Theology that pilfers Israel’s promises and distributes them to a new entity known as the church. Instead, Paul’s understanding of the gospel was fully tied to the fulfillment of Old Covenant Israel’s promises. If one were to read Paul from a ‘historical perspective,’ setting their theological bias and personal interpretations aside; they would find that in the book of Romans, God’s promises to Israel reach their ultimate meaning and fulfillment. Unfortunately, we are still ruled by the same mindset as John Calvin, the need to make passages of scripture relevant by individualizing and separating the text from its historical context. By doing so, we have not rightly understood the significance of God’s fulfillment of Israel’s promises.”³⁷

The assumption that the rejection and crucifixion of Christ marked the end of

³⁶ Replacement Theology generally speaking is an interpretation of the New Testament, which views Gentile Christians as being the "replacement" or "fulfillment" of the Old Testament promises first made to Old Covenant Israel.

³⁷ An excerpt from a Research Paper submitted to Dr. David Hester, Summer 2011, entitled, "*In Context: The Parable of the Wicked Husbandman.*"

God's dealings with Israel and that they have no purpose in God's program after that time, has caused a complete misunderstanding of Paul's message in Romans. Paul's understanding of the gospel, as presented in Romans, was in-separately tied to the fulfillment of Israel's promises, not apart from them. Paul's gospel is rooted in Israel's redemptive history. When Paul's mission to the Gentiles is given an anti-historical spin that pilfers Israel of her promises, it is always misunderstood.

This is the foundational theme of Romans. An understanding of this polemical issue is necessary to properly interpret Paul's letter; particularly, the most debated Chapters 9-11.

An Exegesis of Romans 9:1-29

What I offer here is only two points in the scholarly steps for exegesis: historical situation and context. To give additional steps, such as: literary form, grammatical analysis, key word study, checking and comparing parallel passages, theological significance, and application; would require a dissertation, not a research paper. There are many objections that could be presented by Predestinarians, such as an objection to the historical-critical method and rebuttal of the proper starting point to knowledge [epistemology]. Maybe in the future, I will revise this paper or more thoroughly explore the topic in a later thesis or dissertation.

Israel: According to the Flesh, vv. 1-5

"1 I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing witness in the Holy Ghost, 2 that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. 3 For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh: 4 Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; 5 whose are

the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen."

As noted earlier, Israel was a covenant people. They were the chosen nation through whom the promises of God would reach their ultimate fulfillment. The prevalent idea ascribed to, by first-century Jews, was this idea of covenant. They believed that they were the elect and chosen people of God who would eventually be the light of the whole world, this had been confirmed by the Old Testament Prophets (Is 2:2; Zech 14:16).

Here in vs. 1-5, Paul inaugurates what will be explained in the following passages. He begins by affirming that Israel [according to the flesh] was indeed the rightful inheritors of the covenants and the promises. To her belonged the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises.

Paul actually begins by defending Israel's right to her salvation promises [restoration]. This must have been hard, because simultaneously, Paul preached Jewish and Gentile equality in Christ. Essentially, Paul was defending Israel's right to her promises, but he could not allow this fact to be interpreted as an advantage over the Gentiles. Likewise, he could not allow the Gentiles to claim that Israel had been completely cut off, because if Israel [the root] had been cut off, then Gentiles had no future.

To say the least, it was quite the polemical situation. Equality now existed and there were no longer distinctions such as ordinances [circumcision] to stand in the way (Eph 2:12-21). The Gentiles had been made fellow heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel (Eph 3:6).

At the risk of being repetitive, it is important to stress again that Paul was not creating a movement separate and distinct from the promises that were made to Israel.

His gospel did not mean a denial of Israel's promises, but rather a fulfillment.

Paul had heaviness and continual sorrow in his heart not because he thought God had rejected his brethren in totality, but because much of Israel had not been faithful and thus rejected Christ. In fact, later Paul affirms that blindness had only happened in part (Ro 11:25), not all Israel was unbelieving and rebellious. There was a remnant, known as the elect-vessels of honor (Ro 8-11), which remained faithful to God's plan of redemption. Many thousands of Jews obeyed the gospel during the early days of the church.

Not all Israel, which are of Israel, Jacob Loved, Esau Hated VV. 6-13

"6 Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: 7 neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but in Isaac shall thy seed be called. 8 That is, they which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed. 9 For this is the word of promise, at this time will I come, and Sarah shall have a son. 10 And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac; 11 For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth; 12 It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. 13 As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I Hated."

Again, it is important to note that Paul is not saying, "all Israel" [in totality] that are the "children of the flesh" should be discounted completely. Instead, Paul is saying that the qualifying factor is not "according to the flesh." The point is the identity of the children of God and the promise.

"In Isaac shall thy seed be called" is significant. The fact is that the promise was never based on "ethnic flesh." Ishmael's birth was according to the flesh [a son of Hagar] and Isaac's birth was according to the spirit [a son of Sarah]. To this end, the Children of

God were to be determined by faith in God, not by ethnicity. This is Paul's continual point through Romans as he appeals to Abraham's faith. However, the fact that it is by faith in God, does not discount that a remnant of ethnic Israel was to believe.

"Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I Hated" is a thickening of Paul's point. Romans 9:11-13 are often used as proof verses for the Doctrine of Predestination; however, in reality those who do so, are using them as a proof-text.

The question being raised to Paul by some was "how could God reject anyone who were ethnic descendants of Israel?" However, through Israel's blindness and hardening, they failed to understand that ethnic descendancy was not [in totality] what qualified them as Abraham's seed.

Therefore, Paul's argument in Romans 9:11-13 is twofold, 1. Ethnic descendancy does not qualify one just because of Jacob and Esau, even though they were twins and both Abraham's descendants. God still chose Jacob over Esau and this was done so that "God's purpose according to election might stand" (v. 11). That is, in this sense God showed no regard for ethnic descendancy. 2. God's purpose would be to use the small nation of Israel [Jacob's Seed] to bring salvation promises, in Christ, to all men.

Paul's point here has immediate implications. It is wrong to both generalize and individualize Paul's message of election and impose it on future generations. Paul here is simply using these stories as an analogy.

Pharaoh's Hardening, Israel's Hardening, vv. 14-18

“14 What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid. 15 For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. 16 So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy. 17 For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. 18 Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth.”

This is a continuation of Paul's previous point. Paul insists that the covenant and promises made to Abraham were not just for Israel, but the whole world. Isaac and Jacob were to be carriers of those salvation promises, while Ishmael and Esau were not. Paul then narrows down the list a bit further. After Jacob, it is then passed to those who are called out of Egypt, who under Moses, are given the Law. Thus, to them, belonged the giving of the law. So here we see that Paul starts with Abraham, continues on to Isaac and Jacob, then moves on to Moses and the Egyptian exile-where they receive the law. However, this special covenantal status would prove to be fatal for Israel. It would serve to convict them of their sin and bring death; ultimately, leading to their hardening.

The typical predestination verses in 9:14-29, and the idea of Israel's casting away seen in 11:11-15, actually go hand and hand. Paul's point is to say, just as the hardening of Pharaoh was a necessity for Israel's exodus out of Egypt, so is the hardening of ethnic Israel a necessity whereby the whole world can be brought to salvation. God had raised Pharaoh up and hardened his heart to show his power throughout the whole earth on behalf of Israel.

For Paul, Israel's stumble was essential in the salvation of the Gentiles. By "their

fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles" (11:11); by their fall equals "riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles" (11:12); by the "casting away of them be the reconciling of the world" (11:15). This is Paul's continual emphasis through Romans.

Paul is not talking about Double Predestination and Reprobation, at least not in the way that we have seen so vigorously debated since Augustine. He is speaking of God's sovereign plan, in which unbelieving Israel's purpose was to be the "vessels of wrath," i.e., the nucleus of God's plan to save the world. For Paul, Israel's stumble was essential to the salvation of the world.

The Vessels of [God's] Wrath, vv. 19-23

"19 Thou wilt say then unto me, why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will 20 Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, why hast thou made me thus? 21 Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, another unto dishonor? 22 What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: 23 And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory."

The apostle Paul understood that unbelieving Israel's first-century judgment [AD70] was fast approaching; the Prophet Hosea had prophesied,

"Ephraim shall be desolate in the day of rebuke: among the tribes of Israel have I made known that which shall surely be. The princes of Judah were like them that remove the bound: therefore **I will pour out my wrath** upon them like water." (Ho 5:9-10).

Likewise, John the Baptist had announced the coming wrath of God upon first-century unbelieving Jews.

"But when He saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, Brood of vipers! Who warned you to **flee from**

the wrath [of God] to come?" (Matt. 3:7).

It is not proper to generalize this wrath to be all-inclusive of future generations. In fact, the Greek in Mt 3:7, rightly renders it the “coming wrath” to indicate that it was already at the door when John spoke. It was the prophesied wrath upon the first-century unbelieving Jews. The urgency of this coming wrath is seen here in John’s statement: “And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees...” (Mt. 3:10).

John was not speaking of future generations in relation to later doctrines of Predestination. Instead, his message centered upon those at his baptism, i.e. the first-century unbelieving Jews [Pharisees and Sadducees]. John designated them as the “offspring of vipers.” These Pharisees and Sadducees were unbelieving Jews who opposed Christ, his mission, and the Gospel of grace.

When reading about the wrath of God in Romans chapter nine, this same audience must remain in focus. I repeat, NOT a generalized wrath to be all-inclusive of future generations of reprobates.

Paul cites the same wrath, the same people [**unbelieving Israel**] and the same reason for their condemnation.

“But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are **treasuring up for yourself wrath** in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.” (Ro 2:5).”

"Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour [**believing remnant**], and another unto dishonour [**Unbelieving First-century Jews**]? What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: [**Unbelieving First-century Jews**] and that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory [**believing remnant**]. Even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the

Gentiles? (Ro. 9:21-24).

Paul here alludes to Hosea 8:8, as the Prophet Hosea said, "Israel is swallowed up: now shall they be among the Gentiles as a **vessel wherein is no pleasure.**" Certainly in v. 25 and following, Paul quotes from Hosea and Isaiah. For the ardent student of the Bible, it would be important to notice Paul's Old Testament context. Paul certainly expected his immediate audience to recognize it.

With this in mind, we can see that Paul's intent in Romans nine was not to create a doctrine of Predestination tied to individualistic salvation for future generations, which says, God chose who would go to heaven, and who would go to hell; those who go to hell have been purposely made vessels of God's wrath (v. 22), reprobates (v.18), and fitted for destruction (v.22). Instead, Paul's intent was to point out that unbelieving hardened Israel was prophesied of long ago to be the vessels of wrath fitted for destruction. However, there are those vessels of mercy afore prepared to glory, i.e., a believing remnant of Israel.

Not My People, vv. 24-29

"24 Even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles? 25 As he saith also in Osee, I will call them my people, which were not my people; and her beloved, which was not beloved. 26 And it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, ye are not my people; there shall they be called the children of the living God. 27 Esaias also crieth concerning Israel, though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved: 28 For he will finish the work, and cut it short in righteousness: because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth. 29 And as Esaias said before, Except the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed we had been as Sodoma, and been made like unto Gomorrha."

Here, as he so often does, Paul draws from the Old Testament. However, why does Paul include the Gentiles in a prophecy spoken specifically to the northern kingdom

of Israel? To answer we must examine the historical background and explain how northern Israel became Gentiles. Until now, I have made no distinction between Jews and those of the northern tribes, because it would be an unproductive rabbit trail. I offer my thoughts, in brevity, as much more could be said to make my case.

At the center of second-temple Jewish thought was the idea that all twelve tribes of Israel would one day be restored. Though, by the first-century, Judah's exile had long come to an end, the northern ten tribes had not yet returned from exile. Josephus makes it clear that the northern ten tribes were still scattered well into the first-century, "Wherefore there are but two tribes in Asia and Europe subject to the Romans, while the ten tribes are beyond Euphrates until now, and are an immense multitude, and not to be estimated by numbers."³⁸

Josephus was not the only Jew who saw it this way; many Jews during the first-century still had the expectation of the northern ten tribes return. This was a teaching that had its roots in the prophets,

"Then shall the **children of Judah and the children of Israel** be gathered together, and appoint themselves one head, and they shall come up out of the land: for great [shall be] the day of Jezreel" (Ho 1:11).

"And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the **outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth**" (Is 11:12).

"The word of the LORD came again unto me, saying, Moreover, thou son of man, **take thee one stick, and write upon it, For Judah, and for the children of Israel his companions: then take another stick, and write upon it, For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim and for all the house of Israel his companions:** And join them one to another into one stick; and they shall become one in thine hand. And when the children of thy people

³⁸ Josephus, Flavius, and William Whiston. *The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged*. New updated ed. (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1987), Ant. 11.113.

shall speak unto thee, saying, Wilt thou not shew us what thou meanest by these? Say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel his fellows, and will put them with him, even with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, and they shall be one in mine hand. And the sticks whereon thou writest shall be in thine hand before their eyes. And say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land: And **I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all: and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all**" (Ezk 37:15-22).

"Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with **the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah**: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people" (Jer 31:31-33).

Recently more and more scholars have made note of the fact that all twelve tribes of Israel were expected to return from exile. Dr. Brant Pitre, *Donum Dei* Professor of Word and Sacrament at Our Lady of Holy Cross College in New Orleans, Louisiana and a former student of Dr. John Meier, writes,

"Many writers often use the terms *Jew* and *Israelite* as if they were simple synonyms. However, in the matter of exilic history, such inexactitude overlooks an absolutely critical fact: there was not only one exile in Israel's history, but two...Every first-century Jew would have known that the ten tribes of the northern kingdom were still in exile...The glorious message of the prophets consistently envisioned the restoration of all twelve tribes of Israel in a final Return from Exile."³⁹

Therefore, with this in mind, Hosea says the only people that were declared "not my people" (Ho 1:9) were the northern tribes of Israel. They were also the only people

³⁹ Brant Pitre, *Jesus, The Tribulation and the End of the Exile: Restoration Eschatology and the Origin of the Atonement* (Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen, 2005), pp. 33-38.

that were to once again be called "sons of the living God" (v. 10). The Prophet Hosea had pronounced a death sentence over the northern ten tribes of Israel. Throughout Hosea, this is depicted as a divorce from the covenant, in which they would become "not my people" and "I will not be your [God]" (Ho 1:9). They would be scattered among the Gentiles, by Assyria (2 Kings 15-17, Ho 8:8). Therefore, losing their identity among the Gentiles. They were "swallowed up: now shall they be **among the Gentiles as a vessel where in is no pleasure.**" (Ho 8:8). They shall be wanderers among the nations [Gentiles]" (Ho 9:17).

Hosea was clearly addressing Northern Israel's divorcement and restoration. If so, then so was Paul. I do not believe he was changing the meaning to include double fulfillment or a synthesizing of the Gentiles. Instead he was showing the fulfillment of the above-mentioned prophecies.

Here I believe Paul's purpose was two fold. First, Paul was continuing the theme of Israel's place as vessel's of wrath by pressing their "not my people" status. Northern Israel, "in times past, Gentiles in the flesh" were "without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world (v.12). But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ (v. 13). For he is our peace, who hath made both [children of Judah and the children of Israel] one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; (v. 14) Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; (v.15) Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God (v.19). Sounds like a

fulfillment of Ezekiel 37!

Remember questions were festering about the future of Israel and her promises. The remnant Jews and Gentiles were comprised of 1. believing Jews; 2. those believing Israelites from Northern Israel, who had been scattered, lost their identity and had become Gentiles; 3. new believers from the Gentile nations. **Together, these constitute the complete fulfillment of Hosea's prophecy**, not a synthesized or double fulfillment view. This is also a fulfillment of the above-mentioned prophecies.

Paul's second purpose was to show that despite the fact of Israel's hardening, Isaiah said a remnant would be saved from this wrath to come (Is 10:22-23). But they would also have significance in God's salvation plan thus preventing them from becoming like Sodom and Gomorrah (Is. 1:9). The purpose of the remnant was the salvation of Israel. Otherwise they would have been completely cut off. Though the unbelieving hardened Jews were destroyed, a remnant was spared and given her promises. Unbelieving Israel sought but did not obtain election, but first-century believing Jews [and all those who constitute the complete fulfillment of Hosea's prophecy] obtained it. This should not be carried into future generations to speak of modern elect and non-elect. The Election has been obtained [first-century]!

A Remnant and The Elect

With this in mind, we can now build a stronger case. Predestinarians have taken terms such as “Remnant” and “Elect” out of their proper historical context, and as a result, have misapplied the terms. In Romans Chapter 11 we see that Paul states that, God hath not cast away His people [Israel] which He foreknew” (Ro 11:2). In fact, Paul declared, “Even so then AT THIS PRESENT TIME also there is a remnant according to

the election of grace” (Ro 11:5). One must quickly ask, “ a remnant of who?” The answer: Israel! Paul is simply making the point that God has preserved a remnant of Israel according to the election of grace. Paul continues, “What then? Israel hath not obtained that which she seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded” (Ro 11:7). This remnant, the “election or elect” according to Paul had obtained and was partaking in the promises that Israel had sought. Is Paul saying that “all Israel” was blinded? No. A remnant of Israel was preserved and already partaking in those promises. Blindness only IN PART had happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in (Ro 11:25). In other words, “All Israel did not abide in unbelief. There was a remnant of believing Israel whose election was according to grace as opposed to the works tied to the Old Covenant.

In Romans 11:2-4, the apostle Paul reminds the church at Rome of the faithful remnant in Elijah's day, who did not bow their knee to Baal-seven thousand men in all. I might add, though, I do not have the space to develop it, in this paper, that number would arguably be 144,000 in Paul's time; i.e., the exact number of first-fruit believing Jews, otherwise known as the “elect”. Regardless, there should be no doubt that those who had bowed their knee to Baal, in Elijah's day, faced certain destruction. However, the whole of Israel was saved. This should put to rest the much debate that has taken place over Paul's Statement, “All Israel should be saved”.

Is there any doubt why Paul would use this illustration for the situation in his day. "Even so then AT THIS PRESENT TIME (Paul's time) also there is a remnant according to the election of grace” (Ro 11:5). **Therefore, the remnant according to the election of grace refers specifically to a believing remnant of Israel in Paul's time, in contrast to**

blinded and hardened Israel. They are those whom God foreknew (Ro 11:2). They were God's "elect" His chosen people. One must wonder how Predestinarians can take such a simple message and distort it beyond recognition.

This idea that only a remnant would be saved was not a new concept. It was prophesied of Israel in Isaiah 11:11 “The Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people, which shall be left from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea... And there shall be an highway for the remnant of His People, which shall be left, from Assyria.” Isaiah 1:9 - "Except the Lord of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah."

It is important for me to emphasize, that there was indeed only a remnant of believing Israel that accepted Paul’s gospel message; they were the “remnant according to the election of grace” (Ro 11:5). **The remnant according to the election of grace refers specifically to a believing remnant of Israel in Paul's time, in contrast to blinded and hardened Israel, who were the “vessels of God’s wrath fitted for destruction”** (Ro 9:22). The remnant were those whom God foreknew (Ro 11:2). They were God's "elect" His chosen people, i.e. first-fruit believing Jews, a specific group in the first century.

Conclusion

Evangelicals today rarely discuss Salvation in the context of Israel's role as the one through which the Messiah’s salvation would come. The predominant view of Christianity is that with the New Testament, came a brand new entity known as the

Church; this new group had a new set of promises and a different Salvation message apart from that of Old Covenant Israel. This form of “Replacement Theology,” has led to a misunderstanding of the true salvation message and has led to such doctrines as Calvinism.

Furthermore, this misunderstanding of scripture has led to misapplication of typical predestination verses. This hermeneutical approach has been used by many historical and modern Calvinist such as Augustine, Luther, Calvin, Puritans, Confession Writers, Pink, Boettner, Van Til, etc... It has been largely individualistic and has not taken into account Israel's salvation promises. **Therefore, our thesis is that The Doctrine of Predestination as taught in Reformed circles rest entirely upon a false interpretation of Romans 9-11.**

There is a need to see the big picture, i.e., the total picture of redemption. Any interpretation and application of Romans chapter nine, should be found only in this total picture of redemptive history. It should not be carried forward and applied individualistically in future generations.

Finally, there is much more that can be said on Romans 9-11. I have only touched the tip of the issues surrounding Predestination. I think there is another debate that must first be revived. It is a debate on methodology: the historical-critical method vs. the theological method. It is important to note that Reformed Predestinarians are typically opposed to the historical-critical method by way of their epistemology. Therefore, in my opinion, a rebuttal against this paper should start there. As well as any debate on the things I have stated within. I have offered an appendix section entitled, "A Brief Note on the Hostility between History and Theology," to help begin that discussion.

Appendix A

A Brief Note on the Hostility between History and Theology

There is a certain hostility that exists between history and theology. As a result, the insistence on the historical method is often challenged in three ways. First, by asking the question, "How can this text have any relevance for us today?" Secondly, it is challenged on a theological basis; many feel the historical-critical method eliminates the need for 2000 years of developed theology and seriously challenges God's sovereignty in developing that theology. Thirdly, it is often emotionally asserted that Historical-Critical, Higher Criticism and Literary scholars are trying to remove inspiration, prophecy, miracles, divinity and the idea of preservation, from the Bible. Thus, presenting it as only a human composition.

Concerning the first question, I contend that particular scriptural relevance is not found in some spiritual or deeper meaning. The relevance is faithful to the time of the text. For example, if the long awaited prophecies of the prophets had not found their fulfillment, in the first-century; then the Messiah's mission would not have been accomplished. Thus, no salvation for us today! **Therefore, our relevance is found in the total story of the Bible, which is a story about God's ultimate scheme of redemption.** In this way, history and theology do not need to be antithetical.

Concerning the second objection, as I have said in a previous paper, doing history "may challenge orthodox versions of Christianity;" however, I believe it will also help to recapture the "original intended message." Either way, I believe it is a method that cannot be disregarded for the scholar who is bound to intellectual honesty.

"History and Faith are not antithetical. To appeal to the one is not a denial of the other. Though, history may challenge orthodox versions of Christianity, I believe it will also help to recapture the original intended message. Thus, giving new life to the modern evangelical mission....there is a bridge to be mended and not many have taken up this task. In my opinion, the gap that exists between the Christ of faith and the Christ of history does not need to be that wide. There is a need to find synergy between the two. Unfortunately, this is a hurdle that I am not sure orthodox versions of Christianity can jump."⁴⁰

Finally, a brief comment on the third objection is necessary. Historical-Critical, Higher Criticism and Literary scholars are not necessarily trying to remove inspiration, prophecy, miracles, divinity and the idea of preservation, from the Bible. This is often the emotionally charged response of fundamentalist theologians. Instead, the historical-critical method **seeks to only uncover the original intensions of the authors**. As a result, it is necessary to evaluate the biblical text as one would any other ancient literary text.

The Historical-Critical approach is not necessarily opposite to approaching Jesus from a perspective of faith. It should not be assumed that this method approaches Jesus from a place of disbelief. However, the Historical-critical approach does require one to suspend one's beliefs or disbeliefs about Jesus, theology and the Bible, until the evidence is evaluated.

⁴⁰ A research paper submitted to Dr. Robert Ball, Spring 2011, entitled, "*Jesus' Eschatology in Jewish Context.*"

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