

The Doctrine of Election as it Relates to Salvation:
Implications of God's Omni-temporal Nature

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Thesis Statement

There has been much discussion in the literature addressing the doctrine of election. Does it support free will in the truest sense of Arminianism with a complete freedom of choice, or does it collapse into determinism as the strictest of the Calvinist would assert? Or is it something in between? If the former is the case, how is Ephesians 1:3-6 explained where the *elect* were predestined to be saved before creation. If it is the latter, how does one address John 3:16 which holds that one should simply choose (an act of free will) to believe. Given the dilemma, it is the intent of this paper to show that to be one of the *elect* is not to negate the free will of the *elected* nor God's willful choosing. This is to be shown in light of God's omnitemporal attribute and nature's general revelation as revealed by Einstein's space-time object.

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Introduction

Much time and energy have been spent by church fathers, pastors, preachers and theologians (all past and present) regarding the importance of free will and the apparent contradiction related to and resulting from *predestination, election* and *God's foreknowledge*. Some have taken a particularly hardline view that speaks of God's foreordination before the founding of creation as proof that *the elect* could be nothing else but saved (this being factual even prior to repentance) and therefore sons of God, joint heirs with Jesus (Rom 8:16-7).¹ These individuals (Calvinist) point to such scriptures as the 8th chapter of Romans (Rom 8:28-30) and the 1st chapter of Ephesians as evidence. Ephesians says:

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessings in Christ. For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will - to the praise of his glorious grace which he has freely given us in the One he loves. (Eph 1: 3-6, NIV)

This coupled with other Scripture such as Rom 11:5, 2 Thes 2:13, 2 Tm 1:9, 2 Tm 2:10, Ti 1:1, and 1 Pt 1:1 provide for a compelling argument.

On the opposite side of this discussion are those that maintain, in an equally-emphatic position, that man is at liberty through freedom of choice with no external or internal (as in the Holy Ghost) hindrance but his own free will.² These individuals point to such verses as John 3:16 hitting upon a key phrase such as "whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life," as pertinent to the cause of choice. These individuals (Arminians) place man's free will

¹ J. Carter, "The Epistemological Impact of an Omnitemporal Eternity on Theological Paradigms," American Journal of Biblical Theology 2, no. 1 (March 2001), under "Predestination and Free-will," 1st paragraph, <http://www.biblicalthology.com/Research/CarterJ04.html> (accessed June 16, 2011).

² Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, Mi: Baker Academic, 1998), 927.

as primary to any other force of influence.³ See also 2 Cor 7:10, 2 Pet 1:10, and Heb 5:8-9.

It is clear from the above that compromise could be achieved by an intermediary position if both sides of the extreme were willing to converge upon a common understanding of the Holy Scriptures. Yet one would have to ask “is this really necessary?” Or are there other considerations that may bridge these two apparently opposite and conflicting interpretations of the Scripture without causing one or the other to rise up in opposition. The means to this may lie in how one looks at creation and eternity. The rest of this paper will review what is meant by the *elect*, *predestination* and *foreknowledge*, and how these might be reconciled with the idea of an unencumbered free will of man without contradicting or adding to the inerrant Word of God.

A Discussion of Terms

In order to assure a logical progression of any investigation it is important to settle upon the most probable meaning of related words and phrases. In this section, discussions will be presented as to what is meant by God’s *foreknowledge*, *predestination*, and the elect. Embedded in this discourse one will find the thread of time as a central theme. The emergence of time as a consideration will merit further discussions as it relates to the Holy Father, creation in general, and the elect specifically.

God’s Foreknowledge

The most basic interpretation of *foreknowledge* is simply knowing something to be factual in advance of it being in time. The “knowing” in this case is not related to anticipated outcomes due to the probabilities, but the knowing is due to awareness of the facts no matter how distant in time the event may be. This is as if the individual engaged in the knowing is present to the event.

³ J. Carter, “The Epistemological Impact of an Omnitemporal Eternity on Theological Paradigms,” *American Journal of Biblical Theology* 2, no. 1 (March 2001), under “Predestination and Free-will,” 1st paragraph, <http://www.biblicaltheology.com/Research/CarterJ04.html> (accessed June 16, 2011).

If one were to apply this to God, then one would indeed have to assert that God was omnipresent. But this “omni” attribute might be insufficient in that it is often construed as being present in all places at the same time.⁴ This would miss the idea of being present during all times as when God told Moses simply “I am that I am,” (Ex 3:14, KJ). God is equally present throughout all of time.⁵

Mogen Laerke, professor and Harper Fellow at the University of Chicago, when discussing Leibniz’s arguments for the existence of God, summarizes the position when he says that one “must construe God as a being that upholds the same causal relation to all finite things or causes.”⁶ These finite things or causes to which he refers are the cause and effect in a proposed series of events that propagates back to the point of creation. Laerke goes on to further point out that Leibniz believed all things in the temporal chain of events were equally immediate to God.⁷ Given this, one would have to conclude that for all possible events in creation God is equally knowledgeable or aware of them due to the premise that they are equally immediate to him.

The Scriptural basis for the above is readily found in Revelations; “I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty,” (Rv 1:8, NIV). With respect to time, God simply is. Saint Augustine supports this summation in that

⁴ Jess Stein, ed. *The Random House College Dictionary*, Revised Edition. (New York, NY: Random House, Inc, 1975), 928.

⁵ G. R. Lewis, “Attributes of God,” in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Walter A Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), 494.

⁶ Mogens Laerke, “Leibniz Cosmological Argument for the Existence of God,” *Archiv fur Geschichte der Philosophie* 93.1 (March 2011): Found in “Leibniz On Letter 12”, 6th Paragraph.

⁷ IBID., 3rd Paragraph.

he asserts that “the whole is present,” when speaking of time from God’s point of perspective.⁸ Therefore one might suggest here that God’s foreknowledge is simply his knowledge.⁹ If God is present in all places and at all times is this compatible with the general revelation of nature as revealed by Einstein’s space-time object? And what of predestination does it become an obsolete idea given the possibility that God’s foreknowledge is simply his knowledge? The answers to these two questions are possibly yes to the former, and perhaps not to the latter. Before investigating the former, predestination will need to be dealt with in order that the previously referenced scripture of Ephesians (Eph 1:4,5) may be fully understood.

Predestination

Destiny is asserted from the present moment projecting forward to some distant future state regarding self, another, or a thing. It is to foreordain. It is a forward projection through time and series of events to some end state or goal.¹⁰ It is an act of will in that something or someone is acted upon internally or externally by another willful agent to effect change from the present state. What then is *predestination*, and how is it different from destiny?

The idea of destiny is to project forward through time while beginning from a point within time (after God’s act of creation). *Predestination* is different in that it precedes the act of creation

⁸ Aurelius Augustine, *The Confessions of St. Augustine*. (Grand Rapids, Mi: Zondervan Publishing House, 1967), 220.

⁹ G. W. Bromiley, “Foreknowledge,” in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Walter A Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), 458.

¹⁰ Jess Stein, ed. *The Random House College Dictionary*, Revised Edition. (New York, NY: Random House, Inc, 1975), 361.

and therefore is something that only God can do, that is to predestine someone to a future state within creation before his creative act. J. Andrew Overman, professor of Religion and Classics at the University of Rochester, asserts that predestination is a combination of God's foreknowledge and the arrangement of events.¹¹ Here it is of note "the arrangement" is an act of his will. The knowing and the arrangement are pre-creation, the events are post-creation. God acted apart from time, he acted *san* time. Paul D. Molnar, Professor of Systematic Theology at St. John's University, says it this way, "God determined to be for us in his pre-temporal eternity."¹² The above infers a conscious act of will, God's will. All that is of God has come about through the act of his will. So what is this thing called "will". Jonathon Edwards in his discourse, *On the Freedom of the Will* offers:

That the will (without any metaphysical refining) is, that by which the mind chooses any thing. The faculty of the will, is that power, or principle of mind, by which it is capable of choosing: an act of the will is the same as an act of choosing or choice.¹³

Predestination as used in Ephesians then asserts that God acting in accordance with his foreknowledge chose the believer before the foundation of creation. He acted in accordance to his good will in foreordaining the believer to be "adopted sons through Jesus Christ," (Eph 1:3-5). Post creation God acting in the Flesh brought about the means of adoption (Jn 3:16). Post

¹¹ J. Andrew Overman, "Predestination," in *The Oxford Guide to Ideas & Issues of the Bible*, eds. Bruce M. Metzger and Michael D. Coogan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 410.

¹² Paul D. Molnar, "The Trinity, Election and God's Ontological Freedom: A Response to Kevin W. Hector," *International Journal of Systematic Theology*, Vol. 8, Issue 3 (July 2006): 296.

¹³ Jonathon Edwards, "On the Freedom of the Will," Christian Classics Ethereal Library, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/edwards/will.html> (accessed June 5th, 2011): 2nd Paragraph.

creation God acting in the spirit ((1 Pet 1:1-2, NIV) through his foreknowledge and prevenient grace convicted the individual (the elect) bringing about a state of justification by faith.¹⁴

Predestination is God's will acting in concert with his knowledge.

The Elect

Regarding the elect, or election in general as referenced in the scripture, it is a complex matter in that it is not singular in its use or designation. In fact F. H. Klooster, a professor at the Free University of Amsterdam, presents a compelling discussion that there are five types of election. The types range from references to angels being of the elect (1 Tim 5:21), to office, to Israel as being the chosen people, to Christ's election as the Messiah, and finally to that of being elected to salvation.¹⁵ For the purposes of this paper, election will be discussed as it relates to salvation.

Carey C. Newman, a noted author, adjunct professor and director of the Baylor University Press, deals extensively with Ephesians chapter 1 and Paul's view on election. Key to Newman's article is Paul's use of *eklogomai* ("I choose", "I select"), *ekloge* ("what is selected"), and *eklektos* ("chosen" or "select").¹⁶ From these very specific terms Newman succinctly shows that the act of election as being initiated by God. He chose the elect. Yet, Paul's simple word usage in this scripture, "he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight," (Eph 1:4, NIV) doesn't present the complete story. Missing is the key element, Jesus

¹⁴ Carey C. Newman, "Election and Predestination in Ephesians 1:4-6a: An Exegetical-Theological Study of the Historical, Christological Realization of God's Purpose," *Review and Expositor*, 93(Feb 1996): 237-247, 8th paragraph.

¹⁵ F. H. Klooster, "Foreknowledge," in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Walter A Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), 370-1.

¹⁶ Carey C. Newman, "Election and Predestination in Ephesians 1:4-6a: An Exegetical-Theological Study of the Historical, Christological Realization of God's Purpose," *Review and Expositor*, 93(Feb 1996): 237-247, 3rd paragraph.

Christ, the word incarnate.

Paul goes on to say, “In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ...,” (Eph 1:5). Newman’s view is election is historical in that there could be no elect (those chosen by God before creation) without the history of Jesus’s ministry, death, burial, and resurrection. His main point is that election is Christological. He states, “There is no election outside of or apart from Christ.”¹⁷ To say that it is based only upon some decision that God made due to his foreknowledge prior to creation is simply insufficient. Again, Newman succinctly makes his case:

- (1) Paul, like other NT authors, considered Jesus the Christ the elect one par excellence.
- (2) Paul, like other NT authors, believed that Jesus the Christ preexisted before all time. It follows then that (3) Christ’s election occurred before the creation of the world, and (4) believers, because of their union with Christ, are elected (by virtue of the elected, preexistent Christ).¹⁸

The logic presented above flows from the scriptural language Paul used, and allows some conclusions to be drawn. Before there was a beginning, God decided for the believer. In God’s foreknowledge he knew who would make a decision through faith to choose him over the world. To effect the choosing before time God looked inward to God the Son, and through some mystery we cannot fathom decreed that the Son would be the instrument to secure the elect.¹⁹ All the acts of choosing (acts of the will) occurred from his eternal abode, “before the creation of the world,” (Eph 1:4). Being secured by faith in and through his Son (in the history of the world, inside of time) the believer joins Christ in a union of grace, or in the words of Paul:

¹⁷ IBID., 7th paragraph.

¹⁸ IBID., 11th paragraph.

¹⁹ IBID., 5th paragraph.

You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus, (Gal 3:26-28, NIV).

...This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. (2 Tim 1:9-10, NIV)

In all the above, time and God's presence are recurrent themes. The very idea of his predestining the chosen to become the elect speaks of his will and his knowledge. So what is this attribute of God that allows his foreknowledge to be simply his knowledge? The answer to this question is bound up in what it means to be divine and in his relationship with space and time.

The Omintemporal Attribute of God

To begin a discussion of what it means for God to be Omnitemporal, one must first come to an understanding of what it means to be eternal. Often times "eternal" is misunderstood to mean existing for all times. But this may be unfairly and presumptuously placing God in a box that he created. Time is a part of creation and does not bound God. The created (the finite) cannot bound the Creator (the Infinite). St. Augustine speaks to this fact when he says, "so that the earth should have Thee, the heaven have Thee, all things have Thee, and they be bounded by Thee, and Thou bounded nowhere."²⁰

G. W. Bromiley (1915 – 2009), a church historian and Professor Emeritus at Fuller

Theological Seminary had this to say about God and time:

²⁰ Aurelius Augustine, *The Confessions of St. Augustine*. (Grand Rapids, Mi: Zondervan Publishing House, 1967), 107.

Past, Present, and Future are all present to God. He sees the end from the beginning and the beginning at the end. Being part of creation, time does not limit or condition God. As Lord of Time, he does not live or act in abstraction from it. He internally “comprehends” it, being before, with and after it. Having total knowledge of all that has been and is, he also has total knowledge of all that will be.²¹

We are told by the Apostle Peter, “But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: with the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day,” (2 Pet 3:8, NIV). Isaiah tells us that the Lord inhabits eternity (Isa 57:15, KJ). The Lord God tells Moses his name is “I am that I am,” (Ex 3:14). God is the great “I am.” But what does this mean? To state “I am” simply means “I exist” without any qualifiers. And Revelations tells us there are no qualifiers or limitations to God’s existence, not even time. He is not limited by time but pervades it, and exists apart from it in eternity. As Professor Bromiley states God internally comprehends time “being before, with and after it.” All points in time are equally present to the Lord in the temporal cause and effect chain. One might say that time is irrelevant to God, but perhaps a more accurate statement is that God is omnitemporal.

To clarify, and risk repetition, let it be stated this way: Given God’s omnipresence and omnitemporal nature he is at *everywhere* simultaneously with *everywhen* within his creation. And yet he is more, so much more; unbounded, infinite, and eternal. Does the revelation in nature provide some clue as to a means of understanding this idea, that God is present *everywhere* and *everywhen* simultaneously? Perhaps a discussion on Einstein’s space-time object will be helpful.

²¹ G. W. Bromiley, “Foreknowledge,” in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), 458.

Space and Time

Stephen Hawkins, a noted cosmologist and Director of Research at the Centre for Theoretical Cosmology at the University of Cambridge, when speaking of Einstein's ground breaking work states that "the theory of relativity put an end to the idea of absolute time!"²² The work showed that it was no longer proper to speak of space and time as separate. Inherent to this idea is that space and time are intimately intertwined. One does not exist without the other. To address God's creation, it is more proper to discuss it as the space-time object.

This is an interesting result of Einstein's Theory of Relativity. The idea that from the Big Bang²³ forward to the end of days all came into existence (past, present, and future) at the point of creation. The inspired author of Ecclesiastes states, "Whatever is has already been, and what will be has been before, and God will call the past to account," (Eccl 3:15). In Timothy it is said that grace was given us "before the beginning of time," (2 Tm 1:9). In Titus God promised eternal life to the believer before the beginning of time (Ti 1:2).

Paul Davies, an internationally acclaimed physicist and cosmologist at Arizona State University puts it this way when speaking of the beginning of time:

How can time just switch on like that? Something must have preceded the big bang. And it's true that we find it hard to imagine tracing the history of the universe further and further back to a point at which time just stops. But in fact the notion is neither absurd nor new. Augustine was already there in the fifth century. His considered answer to what God was doing before creating the universe was that "the world was made with time and not in time."...There was no earlier moment.³

²² Stephen Hawkin, *A Brief History of Time*. (New York, NY: Bantam Books, 1988), 20.

²³ Stephen Hawkin, Leonard Mlodinow, *The Grand Design*. (New York, NY: Bantam Books, 2010), 50.

²³ Paul Davies, *Cosmic Jackpot – Why Our Universe is Just Right for Life*. (New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2007), 69.

Once God created the heavens and the earth then said, “Let there be light,” (Gen 1:1-3) all that ever was, and all that ever could be came into being with time. Before God’s act of creation there simply was God, no space and no time. From the beginning of creation all time became present to God. God is eternal and infinite, time is not, neither is Einstein’s space-time object. So how is this significant with respect to God and the elect? What are the implications?

Implications

A Golf Ball and the Space-Time Object

The author of this article once held a golf ball in his hand and determined all that it was, was visible to him. Yet he was mistaken in that he assumed that the opposite side of the golf ball was the same. Turning it over in his hand, he confirmed his surmise that the opposite was as the first side, and he asserted that he now had seen all that the golf ball was. Yet he was mistaken. Invisible to him, and what would remain so was the inside, built up by layer upon layer of material each with its own unique patterns. Upon the initial viewing of the golf ball, though small and finite in its constitution the author was not able to know the details of all that the golf ball was, is or will be.

But God, being divine and infinite, had a different perspective. Upon a single glance of the golf ball, he could see simultaneously the indented surface of the ball that gives it lift and flight upon being struck; he saw all sides simultaneously (top, bottom, front and back); he saw the intricate construction of its interior, and knew its attributes of compression and expansion given any force of impact; he saw its fabrication, its completion inclusive of the application of branding, its newness in the package, its aging, and its disintegration into dust all at once. God was completely aware of the life and state of the golf ball for all times in one viewing.

How does this relate to space and time? Space and time as previously mentioned are intimately bound up, entangled, and dependent upon one another to exist. The space-time object

is as the golf ball above, it is completely known to God. Embedded in its essence is all of creation's time (past, present and future). When God views the pearl of his space-time object, he sees its finiteness, its smallness, in comparison to his infinitude. The space-time object to God is not even the size of the golf ball by comparison; it is a microscopic dot,²⁴ a dot whose history (past, present and future) is immediate to the Lord.

When one speaks of God's foreknowledge, it is clear by the general revelation of his creation (the space-time object) that it is simply his knowledge as stated earlier. Once he said "let there be light," (Gen 1:1-3) he spoke to Adam and Eve at the fall (Gen 3:8-13), while he spoke to Moses from the burning bush (Exodus 3: 1-21), while he spoke to David telling him to go up to Hebron (2 Sm 2:1), while he was saying, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased," (Mat 3:17), and while he spoke to John the Revelator saying "I am the Alpha and the Omega," (Rev 1:8); all while he observes from his eternal abode even now as the author writes while the reader reads this research paper. He is aware of all from eternity while being present with all in his creation.

One may be tempted to say that since all of time is wrapped around and exists in the space-time object, doesn't that make free will null and void, that all is determined? Perhaps it is not. The Holy Scripture states that God is active throughout all of creation, "for the eyes of the Lord range throughout the earth..." (2 Chr 16:9). G. R. Lewis provides insight when he states, "God fills space and time with his presence, sustains it, and gives it purpose and value."²⁵

The question is why would God be active in a determined world where there was no choice, no free will? Why would it be necessary to send Christ to die and provide a means to bridge the

²⁴ Interview with Elder Bob Wolfe of Southwest Christian Church during Saturday-Morning Men's Breakfast and Bible Study, May 7, 2011.

²⁵ G. R. Lewis, "Attributes of God," in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Walter A Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), 494.

lost back to God? The answer could be that free will is not negated, and man still has a choice.

To further understand this one will again have to look at an attribute of the space-time object.

Free-Will and the Arrow of Time

Irenaeus believed that the image of God in man was that of his free will.²⁶ Jonathon Edwards also alludes to this in his *On the Freedom of the Will* where he writes:

Herein very much consists the natural image of God; whereas the spiritual and moral image, wherein man was made at first, consisted in that moral excellency with which he was endowed.²⁷

So, how does one maintain the freedom of the will, which is the image of God within man, if all of time is viewable from eternity in the space-time object? The answer may lie in the *arrow of time*. In creation there is something called the law of entropy. In its most basic form it simply states that as time moves forward disorder increases in the system (universe) if left to itself.²⁸ What this means is that man is swept along in the current of time without any recourse. Yet we know from the attribute of the space-time object all of time exists (past, present, and future) wrapped around and entangled with space. Stephen Hawkins asks, “Where does this difference between the past and the future come from? Why do we remember the past but not the future? The laws of science do not distinguish between the past and the future.”²⁹

This is an extremely important scientific and theological question. Offered here is possibly an answer of why one cannot remember the future. If throughout the entire life of an individual, he or she could remember the future, there would be no choice; determinism would reign. However, because God so created the universe in such a way as to prevent anyone from “remembering” the future, he has opened the door to free will, choice. This premise could also

²⁶ Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, Mi: Baker Academic, 1998), 927.

²⁷ Jonathon Edwards, “On the Freedom of the Will,” Christian Classics Ethereal Library, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/edwards/will.html> (accessed June 5th, 2011): Section V, 8th Paragraph.

²⁸ Stephen Hawkin, *A Brief History of Time*. (New York, NY: Bantam Books, 1988), 102.

²⁹ IBID., 144.

be the reason why, as God sits in his eternal abode, he is so active in (2 Chr 16:9) and throughout his creation, leveraging the results of all free-will decisions (good or bad), using them for his glory and purpose. (See Exodus chapters 7 through 11 as examples of the latter)

Conclusions

The purpose of this paper was to show that through the specific revelation of the Scripture and the general revelation of nature (Einstein's space-time object), that quite possibly the tension between strict Calvinist and liberal Arminians could be alleviated by the fact that all of time is present to God. God's foreknowledge is clearly simply his knowledge since he is separate and apart from, while being throughout all of time (past, present, and future). In his "pre-temporal eternity" he determined to be for us.³⁰ Here then, is the key question: As God the Father looked inward to God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, did he *will* that certain specific individuals become his elect? Two points could possibly provide some clarity.

First, because God is omniscient he knew there would be a fall after creation. He determined then to send his Son to atone for those who would accept him as their savior. How do we know this determination was done prior to creation? Because, at the point of creation, all of time came into existence with the space-time object. That would include the time of the Word Incarnate and his ministry, death, burial and resurrection. This was a pre-temporal decision due to the simultaneity of all of time being created. Jesus Christ was with God in the beginning, and all things were made through him (Jh 1:1-3) according to the Triune God's decree.

The second point simply is the nature of time, or more specifically the *arrow of time*. If the laws of physics would allow for one to remember the future, then why don't we? If everything were determined then there would be no reason for humanity not to remember the future. The answer to the question is most likely to preserve choice, to preserve free-will.

³⁰ Paul D. Molnar, "The Trinity, Election and God's Ontological Freedom: A Response to Kevin W. Hector," *International Journal of Systematic Theology*, Vol. 8, Issue 3 (July 2006): 305.

These two points however, do not take away from the idea of the elect being known to the Triune God in his pre-temporal state. In effect, it was known by the omniscient God who would accept the gift and be saved in union with Christ. Christ being eternal (and God) meant that the union with him was from eternity.³¹ So in effect, both the strict Calvinist and the liberal Arminians were correct. The willful act of God decreeing before the foundation of the world to send his Son so that those who *would* based upon his foreknowledge *could* be saved by grace. So we have a willful act for the elect before creation. Here in lies the mystery, wisdom and perfecting love of God.

³¹ Myk Habets, "The Doctrine of Election in Evangelical Calvinism: T. F. Torrance as a Case," *Irish Theological Quarterly*, 73 (2008), 338, 346.

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