

**THE ELECTION OF ISRAEL IN THE CONTEXT OF  
DEUTERONOMY 14:2: THE STUDY OF THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY  
CHURCH**

**BY**

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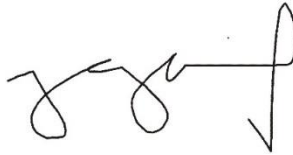


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## CERTIFICATION

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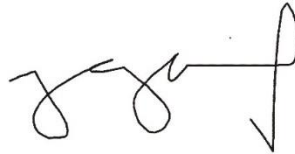


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## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this work to the Memory of My Late Parents

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am foremost grateful to God Almighty from Whom the Grace to study and complete this work flowed. I lack the wordings to thank God who is always crowning my little efforts with huge success. Your wonderful Name is glorified in me, O Lord.

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To God Almighty Jehovah I owe and give everything to His Glory.

## **ABSTRACT**

The research work investigates The Election of Israel: the study of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Church. The study explores the election of Israel and its connection and relevance to the Church of Christ and the understanding in the Church of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. The aim is to throw more light on God's relationship with the chosen nation Israel and the elect in Christ today; to know the implications for and responsibilities election placed on Israel and on the elect today. Relevant literature that dwells on the topic is reviewed. And a summary of the review is finally made. Historical approach is employed for the study. Library materials form a primary source while internet materials form a secondary source for data. The findings reveal that, election of Israel is a major topic of great concern in the Biblical scholarship, archaeology and Christian doctrine. God chose Abraham to become a window through which He will relate with and bless the peoples of the earth. Through Abraham the elected nation of Israel was born; and Jesus Christ came through Israel to bring salvation to the world; and by Jesus God's election of people for salvation is brought to culmination. Israel had the responsibility of serving God and humanity; reflecting God's character to the world; and teaching the rest of the world to know the True God. The researcher concludes that the Election of the Church in Christ for salvation is the continuation and culmination of God's election of Israel and should not be seen as two elections. The researcher recommends that the elect should unite to their responsibilities of serving God and man; and evangelising the world to come to the knowledge of salvation in Christ.

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

AD	-	Anno-Domino: After the Death of Christ
BC	-	Before Christ
Gk.	-	Greek
Hb.	-	Hebrew
IE	-	That is
KJV	-	King James Version
NIV	-	New International Version
NLT	-	New Living Translation
NT	-	New Testament
OT	-	Old Testament
RSV	-	Revised Standard Version
TULIP - .		Five points of Reformed Doctrine; also called 5 points of Calvinism

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# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Background of the Study**

Dualism is almost in everything if not in everything we do on earth. The world is filled with categorization, classification, different ideas and thoughts, styles, systems, behaviours, different foods, means of transportation, administrative systems, different designs, different colours, species of animals and plants. The list is endless. As such one is always faced with the issue of choice. The term choice is the art or idea of making a selection among similar or the same things at a given time. If a young man or young lady wants to marry, he or she will have to choose or make a choice among the available girls or boys. When God created man, He instituted choice by allowing man to choose either to obey Him or disobey Him. Man chose to disobey God when he ate of the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden and started running away from God (Genesis 3). Choice is a very important aspect of human life. When choices are not carefully made, things go wrong. Adam's erroneous choice to disobey God has landed humanity into a sorry and unfortunate state.

Leadership is a vital aspect of societal life. Man is faced with choice when it comes to filling up leadership positions. Man has to choose among many

contenders. Man is usually faced with a choice when not everything is to be used. That is why nations, states, organisations, associations and families, conduct elections to fill leadership positions. Nigerians went to the polls on 25<sup>th</sup> February, 2023 to elect a new president to take over leadership of Nigeria from Muhamadu Buhari. According to Advanced English Dictionary, Election has to do with making choice. Election is the act of electing, or being elected (accessed on 15/11/2023). To elect means to select or make a decision. Election is a common thing among nations, states and organisations.

From the Biblical records, God at different times directed that choice of persons be made to carry out His divine assignments and sovereign will. For example, in the book of First Kings, God directed Elijah to anoint Hazael to be king over Syria; to anoint Jehu the son of Nimshi to be king over Israel; and to anoint Elisha, the son of Shaphat of A'bel-meho'lah to be prophet in Elijah's place to carry out His wrath on Israelites who were into idolatry, worshipping Baals (1 Kings 19:15-17). Samuel was to choose Saul son of Kish of Benjamin and anoint him first king of Israel when Israel demanded for a king (1 Samuel 8:1-9:17). Again He directed Samuel to choose David among the eight sons of Jesse of Bethlehem and anoint him to be king over Israel when Saul Kish failed and He rejected him (1 Samuel 16:1-13). More so, God, Himself chose Noah with his family of eight members to be the saved remnant of the flood's destruction (Genesis 6:11-8:16). He chose the

land of Canaan of all the lands of the earth to flow with milk and honey. God at different times choose men and women for His divine purposes.

We are all God's people but He chose the nation of Israel to be His special people; more special than all other peoples of the world who are His special creation. Man was specially made (Genesis 1:26ff). When man first sinned, his fellowship with God suffered a disastrous breach, for man declared his independence of his creator (Gen.3; Rom.1:21ff). Yet at the same time, God in His grace introduced immediately into history the revelation of redemption (Gen.3:15), so that from the beginning we find redeemed man who walks in faith and in obedience to God. Thus from Genesis 4 on, we see a people of God who walk in truth and righteousness. Yet, while this is the case, no direct reference is made to the idea of election in the early chapters of Genesis.

The first idea about election according to Biblical records finds expression in connection with Abraham, though no mention is directly made in the account of God's call to him to go into Canaan (Gen.12:1). The idea of election became clear in the later history of Israel (Dt. 7:6f; Neh.9:7). Within two generations of Israel, the idea became clear for it is stated, God chose Jacob rather than Esau (Gen.25:24f; Mal.1:2f; Rom.9:13). In all cases of divine calling during the patriarchal period, we see that God took the action to bring the people He chose into a covenant relationship with Himself. At no point in time can election be

separated from God's covenant grace. His initiative brought selected individuals into a covenant relationship with Him. The covenant applied not only to the individuals alone (in this case Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob), but extended to their descendants forever. Circumcision was chosen by God and made the seal and sign of the covenant (Gen.17:9f; Jos.5:2).

The event of the tower of Babel (Genesis 11) led to the division of the whole of mankind, which was hitherto one language, into different many languages and cultures. When God wanted to prepare a way to bring salvation to man, He was faced with the issue of choice. He therefore, chose Israel. Israel's choice is what is known as the Election of Israel. Harris, R.L et al (1980), said that, God chose the nation of Israel because of love for the Patriarchs, commitment to His Covenant, and as a designation as the people of God. In Israel, He raised up men to proclaim His will and to summon to right and righteousness, to a life in obedience to God (Harris, 135). The Election of Israel is a major topic in Christendom and Theological studies. It is not too new but much is still to be understood about it especially as it relates to the Christian Church's election in Christ. The research deals with the mystery of Israel's Election and the association with the election of the Church in Jesus Christ.



## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

It is important to note that, the history of Israel's relationship with God is the fundamental reality of the Old Testament. The choice of Israel to be God's people has a worldwide dimension. No other nation in the history of the world has influenced humanity more than Israel. Israel's religious contribution to humanity is greater than any other nation, for it was to Israel that God introduced Himself in the greatest act of unselfish love ever demonstrated to humanity. To understand Israel's religious contribution to our understanding of God, we are bound to understand the concept of God's election of Israel as His special people.

Going further, the study of Israel's election must begin with two questions. The first question is that of definition: What is the meaning of election? The second question is that of purpose: Why did God choose Israel to be His special people? And to add up, an understanding of the position of today's Israel in Christ is important.

The overriding problem is that, many people do not understand the meaning of the election of Israel by God. Many people understand it to be the same as the elections people, groups and nations or states conduct in choosing leaders where people campaign to be voted into positions they want to occupy. Here during campaigns, candidates tell of what they are and show their competence. They tell

people how most qualified they are, promising what they will do or broadcasting what they have already done before to be more qualified than other contenders. People see it as a situation where people choose leaders based on who they know based on what they had done in the past. Others question God's love based on Israel's election. If God is the God of Love and the Impartial God the Bible presents to the world, why does He choose Israel over all other nations He created, and which He claim He loves? How can He leave older, stronger, more civilised, powerful and numerous nations and choose the feeble Israel of no significance?

Again, many do not see Israel's election as having a connection with the election of the Church today in Christ. Even many Christians do not see this fitting together. Many see God in election as a biased, unloving, sectional God and so not worthy of their trust, honour and worship. These varying views are so because some people have no understanding of the whole of election. Some have thwarted knowledge. Some dismiss it because they have little knowledge of why, for what, and implications of Israel's election and the election in Jesus Christ. Many Christians talk of election and call themselves the elect in Jesus but do not understand the responsibilities and implications thereof.

### **1.3 Purpose of the Study**

The general purpose of this research work is to analyse and explain the election of Israel and the election in Christ and bring out lessons for the 21<sup>st</sup>.Church. But more specifically, it is aimed to:

1. Bring out the meaning of election of Israel.
2. Show why God chose Israel among all the nations of the earth.
3. Bring to light that election means entering into a covenant relationship with God in the order of suzerainty covenants with God as the suzerain creator and man as the creature. God as the sovereign promising blessings and protection if the subordinate would keep her own part of the covenant by remaining faithful and keeping the ordinances given by the sovereign.
4. Indicate the responsibilities and implications for Israel in the election.
5. Show the connection of Election of Israel to the Election of the Church in Jesus Christ
6. Show the significance, responsibilities and implications for the Church as Christ's elect today.

### **1.4 Significance of the Study**

The importance of this research topic need not be overemphasised. Election is a common term which even illiterates use and are fond of because they have

become familiar with the term in their associations, organisations, national, state and local government leaders selection processes. Churches also conduct elections to: call pastors, select elders, deacons, and leaders in various Church organisations or groups. The research is significant to both Christians, non-Christians and scholars for they can now differentiate the election of Israel and the Church's election in Christ from the election we conduct to choose leaders.

Secondly, scholars, non-Christians and Christians alike through this work can understand the uniqueness of the person electing, the Godhead as one electing whom He chooses to elect.

Thirdly, in the same vein readers will know the connection of Election of Israel in the Old Testament and the Election of the Christian Church in Christ Jesus in the New Testament.

Fourthly, scholars, non-Christians and Christians alike through this work can understand the responsibilities and implications of being elected in Christ.

Finally, researchers will find this work useful in their academic research as work offers scholarly explanations and suggestions on how the 21<sup>st</sup> century Church can take election and relate as being the elect of God in Jesus Christ. The work also provides the impetus and opening for further research.

## **1.5 Scope of the Study**

The research work has not taken up election as a doctrinal issue but it covers meaning of election as it relates to the nation of Israel and the Church of Christ. It treats the background history of the elect nation beginning with the patriarchs and their religious life before and after their encounter with Yahweh. It also heart on the purpose, responsibilities and implications of divine election of Israel and the Christian Church. The lessons from the work will be relevant to the Church universal.

## **1.6 Methodology and Sources of Data**

The researcher not only employs Empirical Research Method but employs the Content Analysis Research. The interest here is to show the approaches the researcher adopts for data collection. Cohen L and Manion L (26) refer to research methodology as a “range of approaches used in research to gather data which are to be used as a basis for inference and interpretation, for explanation and prediction. It ensures objectivity and consistency” Method is a way to present a material in a way that will best address the issue.

The research uses adequate data; primary and secondary sources of data are gathered, analysed and evaluated. The Hebrew, Greek and English Bibles, Study Bibles, Dictionaries and Encyclopaedias form the primary source of data. Other

scholarly works on this subject form the secondary data. The Benue State University Library is used to obtain a reasonable amount of literature on election and history of Israel. The researcher mostly used the Orbem Scott Memorial Library of the Reformed Theological Seminary, Mkar which has a very large holding on Biblical Studies and Theology. The library of the Reformed Bible College (RBC), Harga, has a section that contains numerous works that enriched this study with a vast amount of useful material. Individual Libraries were also consulted and literary works were obtained and used to enrich the work. Lessel College of Education library also provides the researcher with useful materials for the work.

Apart from Libraries, the researcher obtained more resources from the internet and other electronic sources like the PC study Bible, Bible works, encyclopaedia or CD Rom.

## **1.7 Conceptual Clarifications**

Here the basic terms in the research topic like Election, Israel and Church are explicated.

**Election:** Election has to do with making choice. Election is the act of selecting, or being selected. To elect means to select or make a decision.

Election is a common thing among nations, states and organisations. The Advanced Dictionary defines election in four easy ways:

1. A vote to select the winner of a position or a political office.
2. The act of selecting someone or something; the exercise of deliberate choice.
3. The status or fact of being elected.
4. The predestination of some individuals as objects of divine mercy (especially as conceived by Calvinist)

The king James Bible Dictionary defines election as the act of choosing a person to fill an office or employment, by any manifestation of preference, as by ballot, uplifted hands or viva voce as the election of a king, of a president, or a mayor; choice voluntary preference free will liberty to act or not. It is at his election to accept or refuse; power of choosing or selecting; discernment discrimination distinction; In theology, divine choice predetermination of God, by which persons are distinguished as objects of mercy, become subjects of grace, are sanctified and prepared for heaven.

These definitions are concerned with election generally. For the purpose of this work, the one that concerns divine choice is the one that applies here appropriately.

General election has theories. These theories do not necessarily apply to the Biblical election of Israel which is the main concern in this work, but I will dwell heart on them in passing.

Theories of election: according to Daniel Hopkins, theory of Election is a mathematical subject area that studies different electoral processes and methods.

I will briefly state these methods or theories as explained by Hopkins.

1. The Plurality theory or Method: In the plurality method, each voter selects one candidate on the ballot. The winner is the candidate with the most votes. Note that the winner does not need to have a majority of the votes. For example, in a three-candidate election with 50 voters, candidate A gets 12 votes, candidate B gets 20 votes, and candidate C gets 18 votes. Thus, candidate B is the winner by plurality method, even though he does not have a majority of the votes.
2. Vote-for-Two voting theory: This is a simple voting method in elections where there are more than two candidates. In vote-for-two voting, each voter must vote for two different candidates and the candidate with the most votes wins. The idea is that this method should elect a candidate that is acceptable to most people.



3. Preference Rankings theory: It is An important concept moving forward to discuss more complicated preferential voting systems is the idea of a ranked ballot, wherein a voter would rank all candidates from most favourable to least favourable.
4. Plurality with (Instant) Runoff theory: Before we define this voting method we must first make two assumptions about preferences: 1. If a voter ranked one candidate above another, then the voter would choose the higher ranked candidate in a head-to-head election. 2. The order of preference is not changed if one or more of the candidates are eliminated, as in a runoff. From these assumptions of voter preferences, we define a system where we assume that preference ballots have been used, and that no candidate has received a majority of the first-place votes. That is because if a candidate has one, then she would automatically become the winner of the election. Then, using the plurality assumptions above, the candidate with the least first place votes is removed from the election and the process is repeated until a candidate has a majority.
5. The Borda Method: The Borda theory requires that a voter rank the  $N$  candidates, where first place is assigned 1, second place gets 2, all the way up to  $N$  points for a last-place vote. The candidate with the smallest point total is the Borda winner of the election.

6. Condorcet Winner theory: Another method of determining the winner of an election: when we know the preference rankings of each voter involves pitting each candidate against every other candidate in a series of head-to-head comparisons. A candidate who is the winner of a head-to-head comparison with every other candidate is called a Condorcet winner. A candidate who is the loser of a head-to-head comparison with every other candidate is called a Condorcet loser. A given election may or may not have a Condorcet winner and/or loser. To see who wins in a head-to-head comparison between two candidates, ignore all other rows and compare the rank of the two candidates. Our preference assumptions ensure that a candidate with a higher rank is preferred to the other. The biggest issue with this voting method is that it often fails to even produce a winner at all (Hopkins: internet accessed on 27/11/023).

**Church:** It is not enough to say in a sentence what the word Church is. The whole knowledge of what Church is can be seen in Berkhof's Systematic Theology (1979). Here we have the idea about Church as a word coming from Hebrew 'qahal or kahal' meaning 'to meet or come together at an appointed place', and from the Greek word 'ekklesia' meaning 'to call out'. And another Greek word that denotes Church is 'sunagoge' which means 'to come or bring together'. Both the Hebrew and Greek meanings show the Church as

1. Persons called out
2. A gathering for religious worship or activities
3. The place of gathering: it can be a building, or an open place without a building or any structure.
4. The whole body of believers in Christ throughout the world
5. The Temple of the Holy Spirit
6. The Jerusalem that is above, or the new Jerusalem

On character, the Church is Visible (it is seen in the Christian profession and conduct, in the Ministry of the Word and sacraments, and in external organisation and government) and Invisible(it refers to those who may be un-regenerated children and adults who may be professing Christ but have no true faith in him and the Church and not belong to the external institution), Militant(it is the church's present standing as it is called out and is actually engaged in a holy warfare), and triumphant(it is the state of the church in heaven. There the sword is exchanged for the palm of victory, the battle cries are turned into songs of triumph and the cross is replaced by the crown), it is an Organism (it is its charismatic nature: in it all kinds of gifts and talents become manifest and are utilised in the work of the Lord), and an Institution (it is its institutional form where it functions through the offices and means which God has established) (Berkhof, 555-568). This explanation

adequately covers what we need to briefly know about the Church and I utterly agree.

**Israel:** Is one of the small nations of the world. The nation of Israel is located in the Middle East. Presently, Israel is at war with Hamas (a terror group in Palestine), at brawls with Lebanon, Syria and Iran. This name first appears in Genesis 32:28 in the mouth of the man (probably an angel of God) that appeared and wrestled with Jacob in the night at Mahan' aim (32:1,22ff). v27 "And he said unto him, what is thy name? And he said, Jacob. V28 and He said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed" (KJV). Thus Jacob who was the grandson of Abraham became Israel. God called Abram from Ur of the Chaldees and promised to: make him a great nation; to bless him and make his name great; and make him a blessing to all the nations of the world (Gen.11:31-12:3). The Topical Study Bible summed up on Israel thus: "Israel first appears as the name God gave Jacob after he wrestled with Him. Each of Jacob's twelve sons had descendants who formed a separate tribe, and together these twelve tribes became known as the Israelites, the house of Israel or simply, Israel. When the nation was divided, the ten northern tribes retained the name Israel, and the southern tribes took the name of Judah. After the destruction of Samaria, which had been the capital of Israel, Judah carried on the name Israel 2Chron. 29:24" (37). In a nutshell, Israel is a nation,

from the descendants of Abraham through Isaac to Jacob; a nation of twelve tribes as seen in the Bible according to the twelve sons of Jacob (Gen. 35:23-26). Israel today exists as a nation in the Middle East. Today Israel not just refers to the nation of Israel in the Middle East, but is seen as all believers in Jesus Christ. The new Israel today is both the physical nation of Israel and the spiritual Israel. Apostle Paul rightly wrote in Galatians 3:9, 29 and I quote: “V9 so all who put their faith in Christ share the same blessing Abraham received because of his faith. V29 and now that you belong to Christ, you are the true children of Abraham, you are his heirs, and God’s promise to Abraham belongs to you” (NLT). So believers or the Church of Christ today is the spiritual Israel by faith.

## **1.8 Theoretical Framework**

A theory or a body of theories explain what a study is based upon. The word theory derives its oldest definition from Hempel as a complex special network whereby a system and an observation float, while rules of interpretation control and guide them (Mehdi and Mansor, 572). Homans contends that, there is no theory where there are no clear explanations of the properties and prepositions which clarify them and form a deductive system. Silver defines theory as a unique way for perception of reality, expressing someone’s prominent insight about the nature of something, and providing a fresh and new understanding about a word (qtd. in Mehdi and Mansor, 2002).

Based on the above idea, a theory can develop knowledge by these criteria:

- i) Provide simple explanations about happenings.
- ii) Be consistent with already founded knowledge and observations.
- iii) Provide a device for verification and revision. And
- iv) Stimulate further enquiry in areas that need investigation (Mehdi and Mansor, 45).

There are varying theories of election. I will mention two here. First, Hopkins' Mathematical theory: According to Daniel Hopkins, theory of Election is a mathematical subject area that studies different electoral processes and methods. This theory has six methods through which a winner is determined in an election. These processes and methods include: Plurality method; Vote-for two voting method; Preference ranking method; Plurality with instant run-off; Borda method; and Condorcet winner method. (Hopkins: internet accessed on 27/11/023).

Berkhof's Eternal theory: According to Lois Berkhof, the eternal theory is based on the eternal act of God. He alone elects. It is the eternal act of God whereby He, in His sovereign good pleasure, and on account of no foreseen merit in them, chooses a number of men to be the recipients of special grace and of eternal salvation (Berkhof, 114). In this theory, no human electorate or electoral umpire is involved. The Eternal theory is the theory I have employed in this work.

The study is a historical analysis of the choice of Israel as God's people and the link that is to be seen in the Church's election in Christ today. The researcher is not going to shop for theories in religion and philosophy, psychology, anthropology, education, ethics or sociology. The hermeneutical framework of John Calvin and Martin Luther will be applied. John Calvin and Luther consider the following as the basis for the interpretation of the Bible.

- i) The scripture interprets scripture.
- ii) The literal sense of interpretation (as opposed to allegory) should be taken into cognizance.
- iii) Christ must form the basis of Biblical interpretation (William, 3-6).

The text of the scripture and the history surrounding Israel will be given consideration in discussing the election of Israel and the Church of Christ today. The researcher considers the above as his theoretical framework for this study.

## **1.9 Organization of the Study.**

The research work has a simple organisational structure. It is organised into seven chapters. Chapter one is the Introductory Chapter which covers the background and states the problem and purpose. It also has a significance section. The chapter treats the scope, methodology and sources, with conceptual

clarifications and a theoretical framework culminating in description of the way the work is organised. Chapter two deals with a review of related literature bordering on understanding of election and the election of Israel, goals and purposes, implications of Israel's election are also reviewed with culmination of the review on today's election and as it relates to the church today. Chapter three concerns itself with the Nation of Israel historical and the religion of the forefathers of the Hebrew nation. Chapter four treats the concept of election generally, purposes, grounds and responsibilities of God's election of Israel. Chapter five treats Israel's election properly as why God chose Israel and ends with the responsibilities of Israel as a chosen nation. Chapter six links the election of Israel and the election of the Christian Church in Christ Jesus. Chapter seven summarises and concludes the work with recommendations.



## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW AND THE CONCEPT OF ELECTION**

#### **2.1 Review of Related Literature**

This section forms evaluative studies on the literature related to the subject matter: The Election of Israel in the context of Deuteronomy 14:2, the Study of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Church. The researcher describes scholarly works on the subject and evaluates them accordingly.

The scope of this review includes Understanding Election, Election of Israel, Grounds and Purposes of Election, Implications of Israel's Election, Election in the New Testament and the frequently asked question why does God choose to elect some and leave some is considered. The chapter closes with a summary of the review.

#### **2.2 Understanding Election**

We need to understand the term in its general purpose sense before considering it in the context it is used and applied in this work.

In general terms, Election has to do with choice making. Election is the act of electing, or being elected. To elect means to select or make a decision. Election is a

common thing among nations, states and organizations. The Advanced Dictionary defines election in four easy ways:

1. A vote to select the winner of a position or a political office.
2. The act of selecting someone or something; the exercise of deliberate choice.
3. The status or fact of being elected.
4. The predestination of some individuals as objects of divine mercy (especially as conceived by Calvinist)

From the four ways stated above, election is a matter of choice in varying forms. The choice making can be influenced as in political elections by the manifestos of those seeking elective positions, but the decision of who or what to choose or elect rests with the person electing or choosing. The fourth has to do with Divine choice which is not open to pressure or influence but depends on Divine will. And this is the one that applies to the subject in this work.

The King James Bible Dictionary defines election as the act of choosing a person to fill an office or employment, by any manifestation of preference, as by ballot, uplifted hands or viva voce as the election of a king, of a president, or of a mayor; choice voluntary preference free will liberty to act or not. It is at his election to accept or refuse; power of choosing or selecting; discernment

discrimination distinction; In theology, divine choice is the predetermination of God, by which persons are distinguished as objects of mercy, become subjects of grace, are sanctified and prepared for heaven.

These definitions are concerned with election generally. For the purpose of this work, the one that concerns divine choice is the one that applies here appropriately.

According to Derek Wood's (ed.) (1980) the Illustrated Bible Dictionary, election is the act of choice whereby, God picks an individual or group out of a larger company for a purpose or destiny of His own appointment. The main Old Testament, word for this is the verb *bahar*, which expresses the idea of deliberately selecting someone or something after carefully considering the alternatives (e.g. sling and stones 1Sam 17:40; a place of refuge Deut.23:16; a wife Gen 6:2; good rather than evil Isa. 7:15f; life rather than death Deut.30:19f; the service of God rather than idols Jos. 24:22). The word implies a decided preference for, sometimes positive pleasure in the object chosen (ref Isa 1:29) (435). God's choice is not based on human imagination. He chooses as He wills. His criteria for choosing are based on His divine guidelines. He's careful in choosing for the fulfilment of His will. It is not in His nature to make mistakes. This definition aptly considers God's nature of no mistakes. He chooses after careful thought. He's not hasty in His ways. Because He is God, the Creator and not the creature, His ways are perfect. He has everything and everybody at His disposal. He has all the alternatives before

Him. That is why anything or anyone He chooses; He uses that in accomplishing His divine will. He said in the choice of Israel, “Now therefore, if you obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my own possession among all peoples; for all the earth is mine” (Exo.19:5). It is based on this fact that Moses reiterated to Israel when he reminded them of their distinctiveness and the need to live as such saying, “For you are a people holy to the Lord your God, and the Lord has chosen you to be a people for his own possession, out of all the people that are on the face of the earth” (Deut.14:2).

Pink defined election thus “It is that part of counsel of God whereby, He did from all eternity purpose in Himself to display His grace upon certain of His creatures” (Pink, 15). Pink like others attributes the election to God’s sovereign will to do what He deems fit with His creation. Who sits in God’s counsel? God alone. Who advises God? No-one. And choosing to use what creature for whatever He wills is part of His holy, divine nature. He chose the plagues to inflict on Egypt to bring Pharaoh and the Egyptians to their knees in order to take Israel out of slavery. He chose blood, frogs, dust, swarms of flies, hail, death of cattle, locust, ashes, darkness and death of firstborns to carry out His divine punishment on Egypt (Exo.7:14-12:29). He did this out of His divine counsel, out of His own will with no interference, or seeking advice from neither Moses nor Aaron.

According to Wright (2004),

Election is a pure religious idea. It originates from the necessity of spiritual life as the natural explanation of the source of its saving impulses. The movement in the goal against sin is directly traced to a cause supernatural to the sinner. Righteousness is never an ordinary thing, or a common privilege that may be ranked beside others, it is laid to the responsibility of God whose peculiar work it is. And, as it is of His inception, its continuance and successful fruition likewise are by His agency. It began with Him, and He will perfect it, by that faithfulness which, if it be too strong to describe it as irresistible grace-thus compulsion of sovereign might-is indeed the pertinacity of unwearied love, of strong, wise, unerring fatherhood over erring, weak and foolish childhood. The free return of man to God springs from the passionate communication of God to man. Election is the antecedent of revelation (Wright, 220).

Wright is saying the issue of choice lies with God. His choice is normally based on righteousness. He is holy and upright in all His dealings. He does everything without sentiments. Unlike man who is always sentimental in his dealings. God does his work of choosing in righteousness and love that can never be quantified or qualified by man. Out of love that can never be comprehended by man that He at different times chose individuals and or groups for His divine purpose for the good and wellbeing of sinful man. And the divine purposes of God for man's good are such that man cannot repel them. All this is done out of His divine will. Other people argue that God cannot claim to be God of love and be selecting people to favour them at the expense of others. I agree with Wright, it is God's divine will that brought man into existence. God elected to create man in His own image when he declared wittingly, "v26-And God said, let Us make man

in Our image, after our likeness, and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.v27- so God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him, male and female created he them (Gen.1:26, 27 KJV), Though creation is part of revelation, God chose to create man and the rest of creation was to be for man and his wellbeing. Thus to say revelation is an offshoot of election is right. The rest of revelation is because man is there. God reveals Himself in the things He created and continues to make Himself known to man as revelation continues. And at different times in history, God elects individuals and groups through whom He will carry out His divine will and bring glory to His name and bless man.

Two Key terms are sometimes seen as same: Predestination and election. Are these two terms the same or Are they different? Election connotes the idea of choosing an individual or group for a specific purpose. Predestination according to Berkhof (1979), is sometimes used as a synonym to the word Decree. It also serves to designate the purpose of God respecting all His moral creatures. It most frequently denotes the counsel of God concerning fallen men, including the sovereign election of some and the righteous reprobation of the rest (Berkhof, 109). So it won't be right to say election is the same thing as predestination. Wright rightly said, it is of importance to distinguish election from predestination

which is sometimes confused. The terms are not synonymous. Election is from the Hebrew *Bahar* and Greek *Ekloge* while predestination is from the Hebrew *Hayaland* Greek *Prorizo*. Their connotation is not identical. The idea of predestination runs through scripture, if we understand the idea in the sense of all-creating, all controlling activity of God over and in and through all things, but it is in no respect as central and essential to the revelation of His redemptive purpose as the idea of election. Election and Predestination are however closely related. Predestination has reference to all-embracing, comprehensive design of the divine will of God in all its work-creation, providence, salvation, while Election refers to the special application of redemption. Also, Predestination and Election embrace speculative and religious contents, but retain them in different proportions. Predestination is more speculative, Election is more religious (Wright, 221).

According to Pink (1975), election is a branch of predestination, the latter being a more comprehensive term than the former. Predestination relates to all creatures, things and events; but election is restricted to rational beings-angels and humans. He went further to state that election means, that God singled out certain ones in His mind both from among angels (1Tim.5:21) and from among men, and ordained them into eternal life and blessedness; that before he created them, He decided their destiny just as a builder draws his plans and determines every part of

the building before any of the materials are assembled for the carrying out of his design (Pink, 15).

### **2.3 Election of Israel**

Wright, J.W (2002) wrote that, after the word creation, there is a sense that the term election captures the entirety of the Pentateuch, the precise Hebrew root *bahar* (to choose, to elect) appears relatively infrequently in the Pentateuch, especially before the book of Deuteronomy. In the Pentateuch itself, election is the central concept used to recapitulate the story of God's promise to the people of God, Israel, the term also points forward to the story of God's establishment of Israel in the land with a Temple and a King (Wright, 216).

The most remarkable aspect of election in Genesis through Numbers is its relative absence and unimportance. As the narrative of the Pentateuch unfolds, related conceptuality and narrative themes appear. In the few cases that the term appears, however it refers to the human choice of land (Gen.13:11; 23:6), or people (Ex.18:25), or describes choice objects such as particular chariots and officers (Ex.14:7; 15:4). Only in the long story of the rebellion of Korah in Numbers 16:1-17:13, does the narrator attributes a choice to Yahweh before Deuteronomy. God elects Aaron among the house of Levi to be holy, which is, set apart to approach God as priest (Num.16:5, 7; 17:5). Only as a result of a debacle in the desert does Yahweh specifically chooses the sons of Aaron to serve as priests among Israel.



The use of *bahar* in Genesis through numbers shows an interesting fact. In its first telling, the narrative proceeds without divine election. Never does Yahweh explicitly elect Abraham or the other ancestors. Election never directly enters the rationale of Yahweh's deliverance of Israel from slavery in Egypt. Israel never receives the law at Sinai because they are God's chosen. Divine election might be everywhere in the story of Israel before arriving at the edge of the promise land, but it is nowhere as well, Wright concluded. (216-217). Wright is arguing that, before the book of Deuteronomy, the term *bahar* does not appear in the other four books of Moses, though God's treatment of Israel and the fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob show they were special before God. Right from Genesis, we see election. God chose flood to do away with the sinful world of Noah's time. He could have chosen pestilence or a deadly killer disease, or famine, or fire, but He chose flood (Gen. 6:7, 17). God choose Noah for a specific and special task of making the Ark and redeeming his family and chosen creatures to survive the flood to save the created order from utter destruction (Gen. 6:8- 7:10). Noah, his wife, his three sons Shem, Ham and Japheth and their wives were not the only families on the earth at the time of the flood. God later on choose languages as the weapon to stop the work of building the Tower of Babel by the family of Noah and to scatter them abroad over the surface of the earth (Gen. 11:1-9). God called Abraham from the family of Terah in Ur of the Chaldeans. He was not the only

male in the family. He was not the only man in Ur. What qualifies his choice is God's divine will and counsel. God choose Abraham who had no child and had a barren wife. "And Abram and Nahor took wives; the name of Abram's wife was Sarai....Now Sarai was barren, she had no child" (Gen.11:29-30 RSV). God choose Egypt as the nation Abrahams descendants will serve for four hundred years as slaves as he had foretold Abraham in Genesis 15:13 " Then the Lord said to Abram, Know of a surety that your descendants will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs, and will be slaves there, and will be oppressed for four hundred years". Here the land that is not theirs is not mentioned, but later the land is revealed and Israel sojourned and served and were oppressed in Egypt for four hundred years. "The time that the people of Israel dwelt in Egypt was four hundred and thirty years" (Exo.12:40). Actually Israel stayed in Egypt for Four hundred and thirty years. For thirty years they were free people, for four hundred years they were slaves. All these events took place as God had chosen to have them. God elected Moses to lead Israel out of Egypt. The Moses who was a murderer and a runaway (Exo.2:11-15). After the covenant at Mount Sinai and the giving of the covenant law (Gen. 19, 20), God chose or elected or called Bezalel and Oholiab for the work of the tabernacle. Moses confirmed it to the people "v30- And Moses said to the people of Israel, see, the Lord has called by name Bezalel, the son of Uri the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah V31 and He has filled him with the Spirit of God, with

ability, with intelligence, with knowledge, and with all craftsmanship, V32 to devise artistic designs, to work in gold and silver and bronze, V33 in cutting stones for setting and in carving wood, for work in every skilled craft. V34 And He has inspired him, to teach, both him and Oholiab the son of Ahisamach of the tribe of Dan” (Exo.35:30-34). God chose Aaron for priesthood in Israel as He commanded Moses to consecrate Aaron and his sons. “V12 then you shall bring Aaron and his sons to the door of the tent of meeting, and shall wash them with water; V13 and put upon Aaron the holy garments and you shall anoint him and consecrate him, that he may serve Me as priest. V14 You shall bring his sons also and put coats on them, V15 and anoint them as you anointed their father, that they may serve Me as priests: and their anointing shall admit them to a perpetual priesthood throughout their generations” (Exo.40:12–15). Though throughout these episodes, the word *bahar* is not employed, but the idea of choice out of many is inherent. We can therefore say that, this idea of God singling out individuals for special and specific purposes runs through God’s dealings with his creation. Whether the word *bahar* appears or not, the idea of choosing is there. God chose man out of all he created to be lord of the creatures right at creation (Gen.1:28-30). We can then conclude that, election is as old as Genesis and not as young as Deuteronomy.

Deuteronomy contains Moses final testimony to Israel before Israel crosses the Jordan into the Promised Land, Canaan. In Moses speech, *bahar* summarises

God's faithfulness to the promise to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in giving offspring to inherit the land. It is not the fathers themselves who are spoken of as the elect (Wright, 217)

Boethner (1932) said that, at the Garden of Eden during the fall of man, man's relationship with God suffered a disastrous breach. Man declared his independence from God his creator (Gen.3; Rom.1:21). God out of mercy and His love for His creation immediately introduced the revelation of redemption (Gen 3:15f). From there we find people who walked in the righteous ways of God as early as Genesis 4 where we see Abel. We see a chain of such people who walked God's way (Heb. 11:4-7). But there is no direct reference to election in the early chapters of Genesis. It is in the call of Abram in Genesis 12 that we first see a clear statement about election. Even here, it is not directly or specifically stated. Within two generations of Abraham, the idea of election became clear, for it is stated that God chose Jacob rather than Esau (Gen 25:24ff). And he went on to explain that by virtue of God's election of the fathers, Israel became God's elect nation (Deut. 4:37; 7:6ff; 10:15; 14:2) and for this reason, God, after delivering them from bondage in Egypt (Ex 19:3ff) entered into a covenant relationship with the whole people at Mt Sinai. Through this covenant, Israel became a nation separated from all others that she might act as a repository of God's revelation for the rest of

mankind (Rom 9:5). By this, Israel experienced God's special favour as a special worldwide obligation bestowed on them. (Boethner, 56)

James Orr (1939:925) said that, in the Old Testament, the word represents derivatives of *bhr*, *bahar* elegit, in the New Testament, *ekletos*. It means properly an object or objects of selection. This primary meaning sometimes passes into that of eminent valuable choice, often thus as a fact, in places where the AV uses chosen or elect to translate the original (e.g. Isa.42:1; 1Pet.2:5). In AV, elect (or chosen) is used of Israel as the race selected for special favour and to be the special vehicle of divine purposes. In the New Testament it denotes a human community also described as believers, saints, the Israel of God, regarded as in some sense selected by Him from among men, objects of His special favour and correspondingly called to special holiness and service.

In Orr, it is additionally expounded that, election as a word is absent in Old Testament scripture only the related Hebrew verb *bahar* is regular. In the New Testament, it happens six times Rom.9:11; 11:5, 7, 28; 1Thes.1:4; 2Pet.1:10. In all these places, it appears to mean an act of divine selection taking effect upon human objects so as to bring them into distinct and redeemable relations with God; a selection such as to be at once a mysterious thing, surpassing human exploration of its motives (so eminently in Rom.9:11) and such as to be knowable by its objects

who are (2Pet) exhorted to make it sure, certain, a fact to consciousness. It is always associated to a community, and this has close kinship with the New Testament teachings upon the honoured position of Israel as the chosen, selected race. The objects of election in the New Testament are, in effect the Israel of God, the New, regenerate race called to special privilege and special service (Orr, 925).

### **2.3.1 Why God Chose Israel**

Pink asked, why did the Lord choose Israel to be His special favourites? The Chaldeans were more ancient, the Egyptians were far wiser, the Canaanites were more numerous; yet they were passed by. What then was the reason why the Lord singled out Israel? Certainly it was not because of any Excellency in them as the whole of their history shows. From Moses to Malachi, they were a stiff-necked and hard-hearted people, unappreciative of divine favours, irresponsible to the divine will. It could not have been because of any goodness in them. It was a clear case of the divine sovereignty. The explanation of all God's acts and works was to be found in Himself- in the sovereignty of His will, and not anything in the creature (Pink, 43).

This is true as Moses the servant of God, who led Israel out of bondage in Egypt and who stood between Israel and God at the making of the covenant and giving of the covenant regulations said "I stood between the Lord and you at that

time, to shew you the word of the Lord (Deut.5:5 KJV), rightly and plainly to Israel in Deuteronomy 7:6-8. “V6-For thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God; the Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto Himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth. V7-The Lord did not set His love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people. V8- But because the Lord loved you, and because He would keep the oath which He had sworn unto your fathers, hath the Lord brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt”. Moses had earlier echoed this when he told the people, “And because He loved thy fathers, therefore He chose their seed after them, and brought thee out in His sight with His mighty power out of Egypt. To drive out nations from before thee greater and mightier than thou art, to bring thee in, to give thee their land for an inheritance, as it is this day” (Deut.4:37,38). Clearly, God’s choice of Israel was not on any grounds of merit but out of the divine love, will and choice to His glory.

On why God chose Israel, Deut. 7:7f said “it was not that you were more in number than any other people that Yahweh set His love upon you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples; but it is because Yahweh loves you, and is keeping the oath which He swore to your fathers, that Yahweh has brought you out

with a mighty hand...” In Alexander and Baker (2003), the writers commented in respect to these verses that:

The nation of Israel always saw necessity of viewing the greatness of the nation in the light of the greatness of her God. This viewpoint is clearly expressed in this passage that Israel is smaller than all peoples; her God is not that of national power, and the viewpoint of her election is not determined by the number of people that occupy the land. 7:7f also speaks quite positive of the indemonstrable mystery of the love of God for His people, as Rowley has shown so expressively. But it is crucial that the choice of Israel is to be understood not in terms of nation’s might, but of the love with which Yahweh loves His people. (84)

The idea of election is a progressive one as it unfolds in the history of redemption, for it permeates both the history and the prophecy of the Old Testament. The story of Israel is the story of divine grace striving against human sin. The election history or story began with God’s promise of restoring man after man’s fall in the Garden of Eden (Gen 3:15), the appreciation and acceptance of Abel’s sacrifice over that of Cain’s (Gen4:4) to the rescue of Noah and his family from the flood (Gen 6). As it continues to unfold, it takes more definite shape with the story of Abraham (Gen 12:1-3,13:14-17,18:18) and goes a step further with Isaac (Gen 26:2-5) and with Jacob the third patriarch (Gen 28:13-15;46:3) and goes on in God’s relationship and treatment of two of Jacob’s sons Judah (Gen 49:10) and Joseph (Gen 45:7). The call of Abraham and his family detached them from their heathen surroundings and practices and placed upon them a new look and responsibilities. They are to be separated from the rest of the people as a



people called to be God's own and through which God's blessings will flow to the rest of mankind. In the promises made to them and the blessings of Jacob to his sons in Genesis 49, we get the earliest testimony of the nature of the hopes inspired by the divine choice. It was an election to blessings and influence, for God said, I will bless you, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed (Gen 12:2,3).

Vriezen, T.C., (1958), correctly stated the fundamental concept conveyed by the Old Testament word *bahar* when he wrote:

In the Old Testament, the choice is always the action of God, of His grace and always contains a mission for man: and only out of this mission can man comprehend the choice of God". However, this general explanation may not be applicable to the term *bechirim* 'chosen ones' which is used of the godly. Instead, this seems to be a defensive term which indeed still shows a consciousness of mission, but carries the idea that one must be tested by suffering and that only Yahweh Himself can produce in one the sense of being chosen. But this also takes us beyond the use of *bahar* in the Old Testament. In any case, in the Old Testament, *bahar* is used not to describe that which constitutes the basic relationship between God and His people, but to denote that which results from this basic relationship. Thus, when Neh. 9:7 says that Yahweh has already chosen Abraham, this fits the situation of the prayer in the context, the purpose of which was to make known in the syncretism of the time of Ezra and Nehemiah that Judah has the mission of maintaining her identity and of resisting the temptation to be assimilated by the nations, as long as election is to mean a mission to the nations (75).

Mariottini said, the question, "why did God choose Israel?" is answered by Deuteronomy 7:7-8: " It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the LORD set his love upon you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples; but it is because the LORD loves you, and is keeping the

oath which he swore to your fathers, that the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of bondage, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.”

He went on to expatiate that, the choice of Israel to be a special people, at its most uncomplicated meaning, testifies to the fact of unmerited grace. God did not choose Israel because they were praiseworthy of being chosen. The fact is, God chose Israel, a people who were slaves in Egypt, redeemed them to Himself and established a special relationship with them. The point that the writer of Deuteronomy was trying to deliver to the new generation of Israelites was that it was because of God’s faithful love (*hesed*) and because of the promise He had made to Abraham that He, in His sovereignty, elected Israel to be His special people and special possession. God told Israel on Mount Sinai: “Out of all the nations you will be my own special possession” (Exodus 19:5).

The basis for God’s promise to Israel was the covenant He had established with Abraham. At Sinai, Israel responded to what God had done in bringing them out of Egypt and to his revelation by establishing a covenant with Him and by agreeing to be His people and live in accordance with His commandments.

Therefore, it was at Sinai that Israel became God's special people. God had established a covenant with Abraham, choosing him to be the father of a great and mighty nation. Now, as the people understood their mission in the world and their place in the redemptive work of God, the people accepted their call and destiny as the elected nation of God: "And all the people answered together and said, 'All that the LORD has spoken, we will do' (Exodus 19:8). Israel became a special nation not because they were great and mighty, but because of the sovereign grace of the God who had delivered them from Egyptian oppression. Mariottini is also arguing that, God's choice of Israel was based on not what Israel was worthy of but was based on God's unmerited love and out of His sovereign counsel to do as He pleases. He stressed further that, 'this particularism of God's love, the view that Israel was chosen to be God's special people and to have a special place among the other nations of the earth, has become offensive to many people. What made Israel to be special to God? The Bible clearly says that it was not that Israel was a greater nation among the nations of the world. The selection of Israel is not easily understood when the issue of merit is taken out of the equation. Why is anyone, for that matter, special to God? The answer to why God chose Israel from among the nations to be his special people is hidden deep in the character of God himself. It was in God's sovereignty and love that He chose Israel to be His chosen people. In His desire to reveal Himself to humanity, God chose to do so through a special

people'. And to say the least, the special people became the Israel the descendants of the father of the faithful, the man from Ur of the Chaldeans, the son of Terah, Abraham- the father of multitudes of nations, father of the faithful.

It is important however to note that, God loves all His creation. God loves all mankind. So the election of Israel does not mean that God has rejected the other nations. To the contrary, the election of Israel is a call to service to God and to the other nations. T. C. Vriezen, (1958), wrote: The truth of Israel's election is untruth if it is rationally understood to mean that for that reason God has rejected the nations of the world, that for that reason Israel is of more importance to God than those other nations, for Israel was only elected in order to serve God in the task of leading those other nations to God. In Israel God seeks the world. . . . For in His mercy He has called Israel to the service of His Kingdom among the nations of the earth (76). Truly Israel is not called at the detriment of the rest of the nations of the world. Israel through Abraham is chosen to be a window of blessing to the rest of the nations of the earth (Gen.12:3). Mariottini rightly chipped in that, 'conceivably God chose Israel to become an archetype to the nations. Israel was to be an example of what it means to be a people who live according to God's laws and teachings. Perhaps God saw fit to take a people who were slaves in a foreign land, a people rejected by society, with no laws, organization, or government in order to demonstrate his power and salvation to the world'.

Again Pink hinted rightly that, “election is the taking of one and leaving of another, and implies freedom on the part of the elector to choose or refuse. Hence the choosing of one does no injury to the other which is not chosen; If I select one out of a hundred men to a position of honour and profit, I do no injury to the ninety and nine not elected” (59).

From all indications, God’s sovereignty, love and counsel is never based on anything outside of Himself. His choice of Israel can only be explained from His side and not from the side of man; it is explained from the side of the Creator and not from the side of the creatures. Mariottini concluded by saying: ‘Israel was not only trivial in number, but they were also hard-hearted, stiff-necked, and a obstinate people, and yet, God chose these people to be his own special people. The election of Israel, consequently, is a great demonstration of God’s electing love. God’s love is unequivocally free and unconditional and this love was conferred on one nation out of the many nations of the world. If there was some hidden potential in Israel, the Bible does not stipulate it. What is clear is that Israel was chosen to be God’s people by divine sovereignty and by the kind of love that only God can demonstrate (Mariottini).

God’s love and God’s grace is the focus that saturates the concept of election in the Old Testament. The recipient of this love and grace is called to service to

others. God's love is never conditional. However, as in all relationships, there must be a sense of responsibility and fidelity, and Israel was no exception. God established a relationship with Israel on Mount Sinai, on the day that He chose the descendants of Abraham to be his special possession. Yahweh gave Himself to Israel and in return the people of Israel were to give themselves to Him. Deuteronomy 4:40 states:

“Therefore you shall keep his statutes and his commandments, which I command you this day, that it may go well with you, and with your children after you, and that you may prolong your days in the land which the LORD your God gives you forever”(RSV).

The election of Israel is one of the most important concepts for understanding God's relationship with his chosen nation. The election of Israel explains the destiny of Israel as God's special people in the world and required of the nation an exclusive relationship, a relationship that God has maintained throughout the ages, despite Israel's rebellion and disobedience, Mariottini concluded.

### **2.3.2 The Election of Israel as seen in Deuteronomy. 14:2**

As we consider the doctrine of election, one also finds a number of references, particularly in Isaiah, to the Lord's 'elect servant' (Isa 42:1, 65:9). The references appear to point to one individual specially called to a particular office

and in whom the covenant God had a particular delight. This would seem to be the messiah, who would save Israel from its sins; her election is thus culminating in a redeemer.

Bergma and Reingre (2003) in Dictionary of the Old Testament, said that the Hebrew root bahar means a careful choice occasioned by actual needs and thus a very conscious choice and one that can be examined in light of certain criteria, in contrast perhaps to making a selection (ra'ah le RSV “providing”), to deciding as an act of an especially intimate relationship, or to taking (laqach) and determining (ho'il). In my opinion, there is only one root bahar; for it can hardly be proved that it is necessary to derive bachur “young man” from a separate root. It went on to state that “on the other hand, it is quite possible etymologically to suppose that bachur was derived from the normal root bahar, and there would be little difficulty in assuming that this derivation had already occurred (74).

Botterwork and Ringlein (nd) speaking about its use in the Old Testament said bahar is used remarkably often in the Old Testament in narrating events in the religious sphere considering that it is a thoroughly secular world –but should such a distinction be made here between secular and religious practices? After all, a careful, well-thought-out choice is necessary in both realms, as when David chooses stones that would be suitable for his sling ( 1Sam 17:40), or when the

carpenter who sets up an image carefully chooses the wood that is essential to do it (Isa 40:20) or when the sons of God choose some of the daughters of men to become their wives because of their beauty (Gen 6:2), or when the inhabitants of Jerusalem choose trees and gardens to embellish their cult (Isa 1:29), or when Lot chooses the Jordan valley for his dwelling place (Gen.13:11), or when the prophets of Baal carefully choose the bull which they wish to offer in order to emphasize their prayer for rain ( 1Kgs.18:25).The careful, well-thought-out choice is the same everywhere and it would not make sense to distinguish one from the other (75).

In all these examples, the principle determining the choice can be scrutinized and this seems to be the characteristic of bahar. At any rate, this is also true of the following examples: Moses chooses men to judge the people at all times (Ex 18:25), Joshua is given the commission to choose warriors that are capable of fighting the Amalekites (Ex 17:9), Joshua chooses a regiment of 30,000 men to ambush the soldiers of Ai when they come out of that city (Josh 8:13). But it can also be said that, when David is threatened by Absalom' rebellion, David's servants are ready to do whatever the king decides (2Sam 15:15). In his situation, Job chooses strangling instead of life (Jb. 7:15 cf. Jer. 8:3). In my opinion, the critical passage 1Sam 20:30 is to be understood in a similar way. Saul does not reprove his son Jonathan merely for being David's partner(Thus the LXX) but he says much more significantly that the king's son had made a choice in favour of



David which actually brought shame on the king and was in opposition to him, whether Jonathan intended it this way or not.

Alexander and Baker (2003) said, as to Election of the people up to this point, the meaning of the word bahar throughout has turned out to be “choice” in connection with intelligible, verifiable categories. This also applied to the cult place, which was determined by Yahweh’s name having taken up its dwelling there-an occurrence that had its unforgettable remembrance in the Israel’s history. It has been shown that the same thing was true with regards to the choice of the people and the word bahar is not broad enough to cover the range of ideas included in the (German word ‘Erwahlung’/ English ‘choice’) or the dogmatic rubric election instead, bahar conveys a relatively narrow portion of this idea when it is used in the Old Testament to speak of Yahweh’s choice of Israel to be his people and the fundamental idea of bahar only rarely stands at the center of what is meant by election (82).

Abraham Kuyper traced the election of Israel to the root word bahar when he said:

So as to avoid this erroneous conception of the election, we must look at the etymology of the word used in the original in the word of God. That word used is bachar. In this word is not found that meaning of the making of a choice out of a large number, but of having a delight in. It would mean then that, the Lord first had a delight in His people and thus chose them. Not because of anything in or on them, but according to His good pleasure. Thus

we read in Deut. 7:7 “The Lord did not .....but because He would keep the oath which He had sworn unto your fathers”. When God called Israel out of Egypt and chose them above the surrounding nations, this choice did not take place because of a comparison made between Israel and Hittites, Perizzites, Amorites, etc., but exclusively and solely because of the Promise made unto Abraham four centuries before (Kuyper, 10).

I agree that Kuyper is raising an important point here. God’s choice is usually based on unconditional delight. The one He decides to choose out of His Divine pleasure and will, He chooses. There is no comparism in God’s choice making. He chose Abram not based on comparism with Terah’s other children or in comparison with the men in Ur or Chaldea at large. He chose whom He delighted in unconditionally.

Baker and Alexander (2003) said; the horizon of the election of the people of Israel is the people of the world, in relationship to which as a whole, the “individual” Israel was chosen. Bahar as a technical term for the election of the people of Israel stands under the symbol of universalism. They further state that, as soon as bahar is clearly used to convey the concept of the election of the people of Israel, it is mentioned so casually and un-emphatically that it cannot possibly be a deliberate proclamation there. The important passages where bahar is used in this sense are Deut. 4:37, 7:6f, 10:14f, 14:2 and 1Kgs 3:8. We read in Deut. 14:1f: “You are the sons of Yahweh your God; you shall not cut yourselves or make any baldness on your foreheads for the dead. For you are a people holy to Yahweh your

God and Yahweh has chosen you to be a people for His own possession, out of all the people that are on the face of the earth”. If we compare this passage with the Deuteronomic account formula, where the concept of choosing something or someone out of a whole also occurs twice (Deut.12:5, 14), we find this idea: Israel which was chosen as a peculiar people from among and in relationship to the people of the world, cannot adopt those kinds of superstitious practices which are described in Deut.14:1. Here again, bahar is entirely rational and understandable. Yahweh has worked on behalf of His people so that they would be a peculiar (holy) people. As the people that are distinguished by the unique inalterability of its God, Israel has their role in the circle of nations. It might be said that Israel is Yahweh’s witness, although this is not specifically stated before Deutero-Isaiah. In Deut.14:2, bahar is used only very casually in a subordinate clause and not as a proclamation. This same is true of its use in 7:1ff. In this passage, Israel is commanded to defeat the people of Canaan, to utterly destroy them, to make no covenant with them and to show them no mercy; and then this reason is given: “for you are a people holy to Yahweh your God; Yahweh, your God has chosen you to be a people for His own possession, out of all the people that are on the face of the earth (v6). This text assumes that Israel was quite willing to come to terms with the Canaanites, to learn from them and to intermarry with them. It assumes that the

Canaanites' way of life and religiosity had a great attraction for Israel and the required unyieldingness was felt to be a strange law (Baker & A, 83).

## **2.4 Grounds and Purposes of Election**

The basis of Israel's election according to Illustrated Bible Dictionary was God's free omnipotent love. Moses' discourses in Deuteronomy stress this. When He chose Israel, God set His love on Israel (Deut. 7:7, 23:5). Why? Not because Israel first chose Him, nor because Israel deserved His favour, Israel was in fact the reverse of attraction, being neither numerous or righteous but feeble, small and rebellious (Deut. 7:7; 9:4-6). God's love towards Israel was extemporaneous and free, exercised in boldness of shortcoming, having no cause except His own good will. He made it His pleasure and gratification to do good to Israel (Deut. 28:63 cf. 30:9) simply because He determined to do so. It was true that in delivering Israel from Egypt, He was keeping a promise made to the patriarchs (Gen. 15:13-14; Deut. 7:8). God is always faithful in all His ways and dealings and there was an inevitability of the divine character in that for it is God's nature to be always faithful to His promises (Num. 23:19; 2Tim 2:13). It is worthy of note that the making of this promise had been an act of free unmerited love, for the patriarchs were themselves vulnerable and sinners (as Genesis is at pains to show) then God chose Abraham, the first recipient of the promise out of idolatry (Jos. 24:2f). Here

too for that reason, the cause of election must be sought not in man but in God (436).

It is true God's election of any man can only be measured on His love for the person or group and not on the basis of the person's or group's credibility. God's choice of Israel was based on His love for Israel. Having chosen Abraham in the first instance when He called him "Now the Lord said to Abram, 'Go from your country, and from your kindred and from your father's house to the land that I will show you'" (Gen.12:1RSV). It was not based on anything in Abram. Abram was serving traditional idols in Ur of the Chaldeans like his contemporaries. God's choice of Abraham was not based on his faithfulness in Yahweh but it was out of Divine will. When God choose Noah to save a remnant from destruction, it was not based on Noah's credibility. In Noah's days men corrupted their ways before the Lord through sin. Genesis 6:7, 8 said, "V7And the Lord said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man, and beast, and the creeping things, and the fowls of the air; for it repented Me that I have made them. V8 but Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord" (KJV). Noah found grace not that he was so qualified for the work. The task he was given to do of making the ark was something others also knew how to do. God saved Noah and his family in the ark so that they survived the flood. After the flood God blessed Noah and his family, "And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them 'Be fruitful and

multiply and replenish the earth.....And I will establish my covenant with you, neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood: neither shall there anymore be a flood to destroy the earth” (Gen.9:1, 11 KJV). But Noah displayed his vulnerability immediately after the blessings and covenant. “And he drank of the wine and was drunk, and he was uncovered within his tent. V22 and Ham, the father of Canaan saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brothers without” (Gn.9:21-22 KJV). This shows that, Noah’s choice was based on Divine love and will and not on credible qualities seen inherent in Noah to warrant his choice.

Further, God is king in His world and His love is omnipotent. Consequently, He effected His choice of Israel by means of a miraculous deliverance (by a mighty hand (Deut. 7:8f) from a state of helpless captivity. Ezekiel 16:3-7a dwells on Israel’s pitiable condition when God chose her when he wrote that “V3 Thus says the Lord God to Jerusalem, Your origin and your birth are of the land of the Canaanites, your father was an Amorite, and your mother a Hittite. V4 And as for your birth, on the day you were born, your navel string was not cut, nor were you washed with water to cleanse you, nor rubbed with salt, nor swathed with hands. V5 No eye pitied you to do any of these things to you out of compassion for you; but you were cast out on the open field, for you were abhorred on the day that you were born. V6 and when I passed by you, and saw you weltering in your blood, I

said to you in your blood, v7 live and grow up like a plant of the field” (RSV). Psalm 135:4-12 extols His display of sovereignty in bringing His chosen people out of bondage into the Promised Land. When choice is being made, it has the potentials of rewarding and uplifting the person chosen. In worldly elections, when people are elected their statuses change. The people who elected them now approach them with honour. God chose Israel and so was going to defend them, fight their battles. He promised Abraham that his descendants would be enslaved but he would deal decisively with the nation they will serve and make them wealthy in the process when He said to Abram, “V13 Know of a surety that your descendants will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs, and will be slaves there, and they will be oppressed for four hundred years; v14 but I will bring judgment on the nation which they serve and afterwards they shall come out with great possessions” (Gen.15:13, 14 KJV).

**Purpose or Goal:** The Illustrated Bible Dictionary states that the purpose of Israel’s election was proximately the blessing and salvation of the people through God’s unravelling them for Himself (Ps. 79:1-3; 96:1-10) and being witness of the great things He had done (Isa 43:10-12; 44:8). Israel’s election involved separation. By it, God made Israel a holy people, i.e. are set apart for Himself (Deut. 7:6; Lev 20: 26b) He took them as His inheritance (Deut. 4:20; 32:9-12) and treasure (Ex 19:5; Ps 135:4), promising to protect and prosper them (Deut. 28:1-

14) and to dwell with them (Lev 26:11f). Election made them his people, and Him their God, in covenant together. It had in view living communion between them and Him. Their destiny as His chosen people, was to enjoy His manifested presence in their midst and to receive the horde of good gifts which he promised to shower upon them. Their election was thus an act of blessing which was the front of all other blessings. Hence the prophets expressed the hope that God would restore His people and presence to Jerusalem after the exile and re-establish conditions of blessings there, by saying that God will again choose Israel and Jerusalem (Isa 14:1; Zach 1:17; 2:12, cf.3:2).

On Grounds of election, Murray JOF, (1988) wrote that

The ground of a man's choice has not so much in him as in the object that he chooses. It is of course true that his own personality governs what the potentials in an object will and what will not, prove attractive to him. But for all that, it is the actual or hypothetical attractiveness of the object that determines his choice. It would be normal consequently, to accept that the choice of God is in the same way determined by the attractiveness of its object. But it is fast at this point that the analogy of the human will is essentially defective. It is not, indeed that we are required to believe that God can love that which is, in itself, neither lovely nor capable of developing loveliness; but that since the root of all loveliness is in God, and since there can be no goodness apart from Him, we cannot argue as if it were possible for men to own or develop any goodness or loveliness independent of their creator, and so founding a claim on, the choice of God. We should not consequently, be stunned when we find Israel explicitly warned in Holy Scripture not to accept the flattering postulation that they had been chosen on the grounds of their own innate attractiveness. They were not as a nation either more numerous or more amenable to the divine discipline than other nations (Dt.7:7; 9:6). We can understand why St. Paul declares that the



election of Christians does not depend on the will or the energy of men (Rom.9:16). It is not of works but of grace (Rom.11:6; cf. Jn.1:13) (679).

This line of reasoning by Murray is in order. God in His great wisdom does His own plans and executes them when, where and how He deems fit. What on earth will make man so attractive to God so as to depend on man's qualities for his action? Is it the sins of man, or his reasoning, or his thoughts? In man, God had earlier seen no good as stated "The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Gen.6:5 RSV). When man fall, he lost the status he had at creation, therefore any good coming to man henceforth from his creator depended entirely on God's love and out of divine mercy for man, and has nothing to be counted from man's attractiveness.

It must therefore be a mistake to try to discover the ultimate ground of God's choice in any consideration drawn from outside of Him, even though it is in His foreknowledge of the faith and obedience of His chosen, for the goodness in which He takes delight is, after all from first to last His own creation. The testimony of scripture is not, however, really limited to his negative result. The choice which is not determined from without is all the more certainly determined from within. And the ground of the choice which we are forbidden to look for in ourselves or in

human nature is expressly declared to lie in the love (Deut.7:8), and the faithfulness (Deut.9:5; Rom.11:29), and the mercy of our God (Rom.9:16).

On purpose of election Pink states God's purpose in election when he talked about God's design in election. According to Pink, God's designs or purposes in election are four. These include:

1. God's design in our election was that we should be holy.
2. God's designs that in election we should be His sons.
3. God's design in our election that we should be saved.
4. God's design in our election was that we should be for Christ (77-83).

Pink here talks of the purposes as applied to both the Israel of old and the New Israel in Christ Jesus. However the issue of salvation is not made so clear from the beginning though it is implied, God in His infinite fore-knowledge plans to prepare a way of saving man from eternal damnation through the chosen Israel. When God said to Abram "And I will make of you a great nation and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who curses you I will curse, and by you all the families of the earth shall bless themselves" (Gen.12:2, 3 RSV). It means that it is through the chosen Abraham that man will find rest and the rest and blessings came through Jesus Christ. What can we say; is there greater blessing than the gift of life and life eternal? All that God said to Abraham finds fulfilment. Egypt cursed Israel by enslaving them and God cursed Egypt with backwardness, and the land where

civilization started is now not ranked among developed nations, but a developing nation. God has blessed the nations with Christ Jesus who gave His life for the salvation of all the nations of the earth to have life eternal; “For God loved the world so much that He gave His one and only son, so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life” (Jn.3:16 NLT)

On purpose of election Murray said that, we must not of course assume that the purpose is the same or even in all points akin in the different cases. He went on to state that, the choice of Israel presents a more complex problem. The choices in the first instance involved calls to occupy a special position to Jehovah, to be, and to be acknowledged before the world as, His peculiar people. “Ye are my witnesses’ saith the Lord, my servant whom I have chosen; that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am He (Isa 43:10 KJV). And this position of privilege involved a distinct responsibility towards God and towards the rest of mankind. On the one side, they were the trustees of God’s glory in the world, “His witnesses”, and the people which He fashioned for Himself, to show forth His praises. On the other, they were the heirs of the promise made at the call of the father of the elect that, in him and in his seed should all the families of the earth be blessed (Gen 18:10). And this work for others is the characteristic functions of the ideal servant of the Lord, who embodies in Himself all that is most characteristic of the chosen Israel (Murray, 679).

## **2.5 Implications of Israel's Election**

Religious/ Ethical obligations/ Responsibilities: Here, there were both religious and ethical and were far reaching. First, election and the covenant relationship (based on it), which distinguished Israel from all other nations, was a motive to grateful praise (Ps 147:19f) loyal keeping of God's law (Lev.18:4f) and resolute non conformity to the idolatry and wrongdoing of the unelected world (Lev 18:2f; 20:22f; Deut.14:1f; Ezk.20:5-7 etc.). Also it gave Israel grounds for unfaltering hope and trust in God in times of distress and discouragement (cf. Isa 41:8-14; 44:1f; Hg.2:23; Ps.106:4f). Irreligious Israel however, were betrayed by the thought of the national election into complacently despising other nations and assuming that they could always rely on God for protection and preferential treatment, no matter what their own lives were like (Mic.3:11; Jer.5:12). It was this delusion and in particular the idea that Jerusalem, as the city of God was inviolable that the false prophets fostered in the days before the exile (Jer.7:1-15; 23:9f; Ezk.13). In fact, however, as God had made plans from the first time (Lev.26:14f; Deut. 28:15f) national election implied a strict judgment of national sins (Amos 3:2). The exile proved that God's threats had not been idle.

### **2.5.1 Individual Election**

The Illustrated Bible Dictionary said, within the chosen people, God chose individuals for specific tasks designed to further the purpose of the national election- i.e. Israel's own enjoyment of God's blessings and ultimately, the blessing of the world. God chose Moses (Ps 106:23; Ex 3:4), Aaron (Ps 105:26), The priests (Deut.18:5), The Prophets (cf. Jer. 1:5; Amos ), The Kings ( 1Sam. 10:24; 2Sam. 6:21; 1Chr. 28:5) and the servant saviour of Isaiah's prophecy ( my elect Isa. 42:1, cf. 49:1,5) who suffers persecution (Isa. 50:5f), dies for sins (Isa. 53) and brings the gentiles light (Isa.42:1-7; 49:6). God's use of Assyria and my servant Nebuchadnezzar as His scourges (Isa.7:18; 10:5; Jer.25:9; 27:6; 45:10), and of Cyrus, a man ignorant of God, as a benefactor to the chosen people (Isa.45:4) are examples of individual choices for special tasks. It is termed by H.H. Rowley as 'Election without covenant (the Biblical Doctrine of Election, 1950, chp.5) but the phrase is improper, the Bible always reserves the vocabulary of election for covenant people and covenant functionaries drawn from Israel's own ranks.

### **2.5.2 Responsibilities of the Election**

Election placed on Israel certain responsibilities. On responsibilities, Hodge (1971:73), Warfield (1929:30) agreed that the elect of God are not chosen only for

salvation, but also for service. They should have the assurance of their calling and election which gives them confidence, strength and a sense of responsibility to serve Christ as her Lord in this World (Rom 12, Eph. 1:4). In this way, the elect glorify Christ as their covenant Lord to whom they owe all that they are and have.

Boethner (1932) also said that, the elect of God are chosen not only for salvation but have the responsibility of service (2Pet.1:10). This makes the follower of Christ come to the knowledge of the fact that he or she has it as a duty to glorify and serve Christ as Lord in this world. (Eph.1:4). By serving Christ, the elect glorify Jesus Christ as the Lord of the covenant to whom they owe everything (1Cor.6:20; 7:23) (Boethner, 57).

### **2.5.3 Forfeiture of Promises through Unbelief and Disobedience**

God is a holy and righteous God. He is merciful, forgiving, yet he hates and punishes sin. And more so, breaking of covenant law attracts punishment. He has chosen and loved Israel yet for His glory, disobedience will lead to denial of the covenant blessings. The Anchor Bible Dictionary said that, the prophets, facing widespread unbelief and disobedience, insist that, God would reject the ungodly among His people (Jer.6:30; 7:29). Isaiah foretold that, only a faithful remnant would live to enjoy the golden age that would follow the inevitable judgment on Israel's sins (Isa.10:20-22; 4:3; 27:6; 37:31f). Jeremiah and Ezekiel, living in the

time of that judgment, looked for a when God, as part of His work of restoration, would regenerate such of His people as He had spared and ensured their covenant faithfulness for the future by giving each of them a new heart (Jer. 31:31f; 32:39f; Ezk.11:19f; 36:25f). These prophecies, with their focus on individual piety, pointed to an individualizing of the concept of election (Ps.65:4). They gave grounds for distinguishing between election to privileges and election to life, and for concluding that, while God had chosen the whole nation for the privilege of living under the covenant, he had chosen only some of them (those made faithful by regeneration) to inherit the riches of the relationship to Himself which the covenant held out, while the rest forfeited those riches by their unbelief (436).

On faithfulness to the covenant relationship, Boethner said that Israel's election did not mean that all Israelites trusted God's promises and served God faithfully. All through the history of Israel, one sees that the nation varied so much in its obedience to the covenant. Many a times, Israel disobeyed and lapsed into unfaithfulness to the covenant. Only frequently Israel believed that they were physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, God remained inalienable despite their lack of faith and disobedience. Many people in Israel believed that hence they are fulfilling the ritual obligations; God's favour will always follow them. Moses severely warned them concerning this assumption. And both the early and later prophets following Moses' footsteps warned Israel severally and in stern

terms. (Deut.28:15f; 1Kgs. 21:21; Isa.1:10f; Hos.1:1f; Rom.10:19f). In spite of the warnings, Israel refused to abide by the covenant regulations, refused to obey the commandments of God and so went into captivity on God's directive. By allowing Israel to go into captivity, God showed that esteemed election of a nation or a group to political or ecclesiastical favour does not necessarily guarantee sure covenant relationship and divine favour between the creature and the creator. Keeping of the covenant regulations is a basic requirement. And unless God enters into a covenant relationship with a chosen individual before divine favours are guaranteed (Boethner, 56). It is important to note that, even though Israel was chosen by God as His special people and possession, Israel never lived up to God's expectations and standards. God established a covenant with Israel and Israel was under covenant obligations to keep the rules of the covenant. They continually fall short by turning to idols and committing abominable acts, thus breaking the covenant. It was only the unmerited Grace, Mercy and Love of God towards His people that kept the covenant.

## **2.6 Election in the New Testament**

When we talk of election in the New Testament, we are not talking of a new election but of the continuation of the election of Israel. And since the New Testament centers or revolves around Christ, election in the New Testament also centers on Christ. God in the first instance chose Abraham out of the many sons of



Terah (Gen.12:1-8). From Abraham, God chose Isaac out of the many sons of Abraham (Gen.16:15; 21:1-3; 25:1-2), and between the two sons of Isaac: Esau and Jacob, God chose Jacob (Gen.25:21-26). And thus Jacob when he grew up bore twelve sons which formed the nation of Israel (Gen.35:23-26). And out of the many nations of the world God chose Israel the nation that emanated in fulfilment of promises to Abraham as we can see in Genesis 13:14-16 thus: “The Lord said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him, ‘Lift up your eyes and look from the place where you are, northward and southward and eastward and westward; for all the land you see, I will give to you and to your descendants forever. I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth; so that if one can count the dust of the earth, your descendants also can be counted” (RSV). Here we understand that even land was chosen for Abraham’s descendants even before he had a child. This promise of descendants is repeated to Abraham in Genesis 17:5, 13). God changed Abram’s name to Abraham and Sarai to Sarah saying, “Behold my covenant is with you, and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations. No longer shall your name be Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you the father of multitude of nations. I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come forth from you. And I will establish my covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your descendants

after you. And I will give to you and to your descendants after you, the land of your sojourning, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.... As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. I will bless her, and moreover I will give you a son by her; I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; and kings of peoples shall come from her” (Gen.17:4-8, 15-16 RSV). Here even land was chosen for the chosen Abraham and his descendants. Then later, God chose David from the tribe of Judah for kingship. And David was to bear the sceptre that was bequeathed to Judah by Jacob during his final blessings on his children before death “the sceptre will not depart from Judah, or the ruler’s staff from his descendants, until the coming of the One to whom it belongs, the One whom all nations will honour” (Gen.49:10 NLT). God established a covenant with David, promising him that one of his descendants would be on the throne forever. Through Nathan, God said to David “And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established forever before thee; thy throne shall be established forever” (2Sam.7:16 KJV). Though during the exile and the return to the promise land, no Davidic king held power, God kept the royal line alive until He sent His own Son Jesus as David’s true son. Jesus, the son of David, now rules forever at God’s right hand as King of kings and Lord of lords. From history, we see the election of Abraham passing through his descendants as God continued to re-establish his covenant with Abraham from generation to generation as He had

promised Abraham. The whole thing mirrors down to Jesus. From Abraham to Isaac, to Jacob, to Judah, to David, to Jesus the son of David, the whole thing now centers on Jesus, consequently election in the New Testament is the election of Jesus and of course the election in Jesus.

Pink writing on election in Christ, said that, being chosen in Christ necessarily imply that He was chosen first, as the soil in which we were set. When God chose Christ, it was not as a single or private person, but as a public person, as head of His body, we being chosen in Him as the members of that body..... Let those, then who desire to preach Christ, see to it that they give Him the pre-eminence in all things- election not exempted! Let them learn to give unto Jesus of Nazareth His full honour, that which the father Himself had given to Him. It is superlative honour that Christ is the channel through which all the grace and glory we have, or shall have, flow to us and was set up as such from the beginning. As Romans 8:29 so plainly teaches, it was in connection with election that God appointed His own beloved son to be the firstborn among many brethren. Christ being appointed as the magnum opus of divine wisdom, the outstanding prototype, and we ordained to be so many little copies and models of Him. Christ is the first and last of all God's thought, counsel and traditions (Pink, 29).

According to Derek Wood (1980), the New Testament announces the extension of God's covenant – promises to the Gentile world and the transference

of covenant privileges from the linear seed of Abraham to a predominantly Gentile body (Mat.21:43) consisting of all who have become Abraham's true seed and God's true Israel through faith in Christ. (Rom. 4:9-15; 9:6; Gal.3:14f, 29; 6:16; Eph.2:11f; 3:6-8). The unbelieving natural branches were broken off from God's olive tree (the elect community sprung from the Patriarchs) and wild olive branches (believing gentiles) were in grafted in their place (Rom 11:16-24). Faithless Israel was rejected and judged, and the international Christian Church took Israel's place as God's chosen nation living in the world as His people and worshipping and proclaiming Him as their God (Wood, 436).

Wood further said that the New Testament presents the idea of election in the following forms:

- a. Jesus is hailed as God's elect one by the father Himself (Lk.9:35 reading *eklelegemenos*, an echo of Isa.42:11) and probably by John the Baptist (Jn.1:34, if *eklektos* is the right reading). The smear of Lk.23:35 shows that the elect one was used as a messianic designation in Christ's day (as it is in the book of Enoch 40:5, 45:3-5 etc.). In 1Pet.2:4, 6 Christ is called God's elect cornerstone. This echoes Isa 28:16 LXX. in reference to Christ, the designation points to the unique and distinctive office with which he is invested and to the peculiar delight which God the father takes in him (J Murray in Bakers Dictionary of Theology 1960 p179).
- b. The adjective 'elect' denotes the Christian community in its character and the chosen people of God in contrast with the rest of mankind. The usage simply echoes the Old Testament. The church is 'an elect race' (1Pet 2:9 quoting Isa 43:20 cf. also 2Jn 1, 13) having the privileges of access to God and the responsibilities of praising and proclaiming Him, and faithfully guarding His truth, which Israel and God had before. As in the case of Israel,

God had magnified His mercy by choosing poor and undistinguished persons for His momentous destiny (1Cor.1:27f; Jos.2:5 cf. Deut.7:7; 9:6)and, as before, God's gracious choice and call had created a people –His people- which had no existence as a people before (1Pet.2:10; Rom 9:25f). In the Synoptic Gospels, Christ refers to the eklektoi (p1) in various eschatological contexts. They are those whom God accepts and will accept, because they have responded to the gospel invitation and come to the wedding feast stripped of self-righteousness and clad in the wedding garment provided by the host i.e. trusting in God's mercy (Mt 22:14). God will vindicate them (Lk.18:7) and keep them through coming tribulations and peril (Mk 13:20) for they are the object of His special care.

- c. Eklegomai is used of Christ's choice of His apostles (Lk.6:13; cf. Acts 1:24; 9:15) and the church's choice of deacons (Acts 6:5) and delegates (Acts 15:22). This is election to special service from among the ranks of the elect community, as in the Old Testament. Christ's choosing of the twelve for apostolic office involved the choosing of them out of the world to enjoy salvation (cf. Jn.15:16) except in the case of Judas (cf. Jn.13:18) (437-439).

In Neusner's (ed.) (1999), Dictionary of Judaism, it is stated that, the belief that God had elected some also plays an important role in the New Testament. Jesus Himself, the son of God is called the Chosen One. "And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, 'This is my Son, my Chosen, listen to Him'" (Lk. 9:35). Jesus is also called the chosen messiah. "And the people stood beholding. And the rulers also with them derided Him saying, He saved others, let Him save Himself, if He be Christ, the Chosen one of God" (Lk.23:35). And the followers of Jesus are branded as the ones whom God has selected. According to the gospel of John, Jesus himself called His disciples the Chosen Ones. Hear Jesus "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own, but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen

you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you” (Jn15:19 KJV). And elsewhere the members of the Church are so addressed “ But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood and an holy nation, a peculiar people, that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvellous light” (1 Pet.2:9 KJV). The ones God has chosen will endure the final tribulation (Mat.24:22-245), and ultimately the son of man will come to gather them unto Himself (Mat.24:30-31). Revelation 17:14 also says a similar thing “these shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them; for He is Lord of lords and King of kings, and they that are with Him are called, and chosen and faithful” (KJV). The best known presentation of election in the New Testament is found in Paul’s epistle to the Romans, chapters 9-11. (Paul treated a similar thing in Romans 8:28-39). There Paul speaks of the divine election of Jacob (the ancestor of Israel) rather than Esau, defending it as having its own reason in God’s plan. He rejects the idea that God has abolished the election of Israel by encompassing His call and grace to new Israelites who believe in Jesus Christ. The tenacity is to cause jealousy among the Jewish nationals so they would rekindle their faith in their God so that they being the original recipients of God’s covenant and promises will also be saved and not be missed out. The author of the letter to the Ephesians said God has chosen a believer to holiness, while James

noted in his letter that, God has chosen the poor so that they would become rich (187).

As in all other aspects of God's revelation, the New Testament both continues and fulfils that which was revealed in the Old Testament. Christ's teachings contain many references to the elect and to God's action in choosing and calling men to Himself in and through Christ (Mt 24:22ff, Mk 13:20f; Lk.18:7; Jn. 6:37, 65; 10:15f). After His ascension, He led the Church to see that God had chosen gentiles to become members of the covenant people (Acts 15:5f; Gal. 2:11f), and through the instrumentality of the Apostle Paul in particular revealed the doctrine in all its fullness (Rom 9-11, Eph.1).

According to Boethner, as one tries to understand the entire New Testament doctrine of election, one discovers that, as in the OT, it centers on the covenant which Christ is the covenant mediator and head. He is the chosen one of God. Even scoffers called him so. "And the people stood by watching; but the rulers scoffed at Him, saying, 'He saved others; let Him save Himself, if He is the Christ of God, His Chosen One'" (Lk23:35-RSV). In the eternal covenant, Christ is the one chosen to redeem mankind from sins. There is no teaching that Christ saved all people (though He died for the salvation of all mankind), it is clear that God has elected some individuals in Christ for salvation (Jhn.6:37; Eph.1:4f). God the father

bestows His love on the elect sinners because He sees them always in Christ the chosen redeemer (Boethner, 56). Hence we can rightly conclude that, the Old Testament finds fulfilment in the New Testament. Moses was the one who stood between God and Israel in the covenant at Mount Sinai and through whom the law was given. Moses is a type of Christ in the Old Testament. Jesus came as the Saviour and mediator of the New Covenant. The Israelites of our time are the believers in Christ Jesus. They are elected in Jesus and with Him as the first fruit of God's election.

## **2.7 The Church of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

The Church in the world today is referred to as the 21<sup>st</sup>. Century Church or the Church in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. We need to understand the 21<sup>st</sup>. century. 'The 21<sup>st</sup>. Century is the current century in the Anno Domini or Common Era, in accordance with the Gregorian calendar. It began on 1 January, 2001 and will end on 31 December, 2100. It is the first century of the third millennium' (Wikipedia: Accessed on 25/12/2023). The Church of the 21st century in this paper refers to the epitome of all the established churches prevailing and ministering in both forms in the world. It is the total number of all the churches surviving and ministering presently within the changed culture of the 21st century.

John Howard Yoder (2002) describes the church as: "An alternative community in which disciples and people of virtue, or rather, of faith are formed. It



is a laboratory of imagining and practicing new forms of social life, a hermeneutic and creative community in Diaspora; a people of God offering the world a vision of restoration of humanity in Christ, in the faith community, and beyond” (488).

Yoder did not recognize the ecclesia as a partnership of decent colossuses nor did he recognize it as being beyond error and sin. From his perception of the church as a product of forgiveness, the ecclesia should propagate the message of forgiveness in the angry and bloodletting world of the 21st century.

The 21<sup>st</sup> century as an era has its peculiarities. And since the church is operating in this era, the conditions of this era can affect the church both positively and negatively. Pokol, B.J (2020) said that “It is no news that the 21st century has brought ease of life in every aspect of human endeavour and survival. Technological advancement has offered several opportunities that humanity could utilize to curtail most of the crises of life”. In a similar vein, Pokol quoted Hans Kung (1967), the Roman Catholic theologian, and a renowned scholar on the subject of ecclesia, that he is of the view that the church of the 21st century is rapidly approaching its third millennium because for the world in which she lives, the future has begun (3). For him, the church is fortunate to live within such a dynamic world but he equally expresses doubt as to whether the church is surviving the tides and utilizing the opportunities offered effectively. One could

argue that it is possible for the church to live in the midst of opportunities and yet fail to utilize such opportunities constructively either because of conservative attitude or gullibility to anything that comes. Ease of communication and transportation has many advantages to offer if the Church could take and build on it. Kung argues that “the 21st century has provided increasingly rapid means of communication and transportation; there is an explosion of new instruments, synthetic materials, methods of production are being rationalized, the expectation of human life has been increased by a decade or more; tremendous achievements have been made in Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Medicine, Psychology, Sociology, Economics, and Theology, all of which have brought Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the whole earth at the doorsteps of the church to reach with the gospel” (Kung, 3).

The Church of the 21st century is characterized by the search for church unity and the continued resistance to persecution and secularization. It is important to say something about developments in the 21<sup>st</sup> century Church. Here the main stream sections of the church will be mentioned.

**The Roman Catholic Church:** few major things will come to light as stated in the Christianity in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

With the election of Pope Benedict XVI, there was decentralized beatifications and reverted a decision of John Paul II regarding papal elections. Benedict XVI advocated a return to fundamental Christian values to counter the increased secularisation of many Western countries. He taught the importance of both the

Catholic Church and an understanding of God's redemptive love. Pope Benedict also revived a number of traditions, including elevating the Tridentine Mass to a more prominent position. He strengthened the relationship between the Catholic Church and art, promoted the use of Latin, and reintroduced traditional papal garments, for which reason he was called "the pope of aesthetics". Major lawsuits emerged in 2001, during the pontificate of John Paul II, claiming that priests had sexually abused minors. As a cardinal, Benedict convinced John Paul II to put his Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in charge of all investigations and policies surrounding sexual abuse in order to combat such abuse more efficiently. In 2006 Pope Benedict XVI removed Legion of Christ founder Marcial Maciel from active ministry based on the results of an investigation that he had started while head of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, before his election as Pope in April 2005. Maciel was ordered "to conduct a reserved life of prayer and penance, renouncing every public ministry." As pope, Benedict defrocked at least 400 priests. In July 2007, Pope Benedict issued the *motu proprio Summorum Pontificum*, allowing priests to celebrate the Tridentine Mass without first having to receive permission from their local ordinary. The Priestly Society of Saint Pius X, which was consulted by Pope Benedict during the process, said in a statement that it "extends its deep gratitude to (Pope Benedict) for this great spiritual benefit" and "rejoices to see the Church thus regain her liturgical Tradition, and give the possibility of a free access to the treasure of the Traditional Mass ... (for those) who had so far been deprived of it." The Jewish Anti-Defamation League (ADL) attacked the *motu proprio*, because the text of the Good Friday Prayer for the Jews in the 1962 Missal includes a request to God to "lift the veil" from Jewish hearts and to show mercy, according to one translation, "even to the Jews" (or "also to the Jews"), and refers to "the blindness of that people" (to Christ). In reply to such criticisms, Dr. John Newton, editor of Baronius Press, pointed out that the prayer draws heavily on 2 Corinthians chapters 3 and 4, and the invocation for God to "lift the veil from their hearts" is a direct quote from 2 Cor. 3:15. In October 2009, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith announced Pope Benedict XVI's intention to create a new type of ecclesiastical structure, called a personal ordinariate, for groups of Anglicans entering into full communion with the See of Rome. This created structures for former Anglicans within the Catholic Church independent of existing Latin Church dioceses. The personal ordinariates utilize the Anglican Use for their liturgy, a use of the Roman Rite modified with Anglican elements; the ordinariates also retain elements of

Anglican spirituality and religious practice, including married priests but not married bishops. Anglican *rum coetibus* was issued on 4 November 2009. "The Personal Ordinariate of the Chair of St. Peter is equivalent to a diocese, created by the Vatican in 2012 for people nurtured in the Anglican tradition who wish to become Catholic." With support from Pope Benedict, in November 2011, Cardinal Antonio Cañizares Llovera, Prefect of the Congregation for Divine Worship, established a "Liturgical art and sacred music commission" which will be responsible for evaluating both new construction and renovation projects as well as music used during the celebration of Mass to ensure that they comply with church guidelines. Previously, it was common for churches to be renovated in a way critics often described as a "wreck ovation." On 28 February 2013, Pope Benedict XVI resigned from his ministry as pope. Benedict's decision to step down as leader of the Catholic Church made him the first pope to relinquish the office since Gregory XII in 1415 (who did so in order to end the Western Schism), the first to do so on his own initiative since Celestine V in 1294, Francis Pope Francis (left) and his predecessor Pope emeritus Benedict XVI (right) Since the election of Pope Francis in 2013, he has displayed a simpler and less formal approach to the office, choosing to reside in the Vatican guesthouse rather than the papal residence.

Following the resignation of Benedict, Francis became the first Jesuit pope, the first pope from the Americas, and the first from the Southern Hemisphere. On 18 June 2015, Francis released his encyclical *Laudato si'*, in which he critiqued consumerism and irresponsible development, laments environmental degradation and global warming, and calls all people of the world to take "swift and unified global action." Since 2016, Francis has faced increasingly open criticism, particularly from theological conservatives, on the question of admitting civilly divorced and remarried Catholics to Communion with the publication of *Amoris Laetitia*, and on the question of alleged systematic cover up of clergy sexual abuse. In September 2016, Cardinals Raymond Burke, Carlo Caffarra, Walter Brandmüller, and Joachim Meisner wrote a letter to Francis, requesting that he clarify five statements from *Amoris Laetitia*. After the letter was ignored, the cardinals publicized their letter, popularly known as the dubia. The following year, in August 2017, a filial correction was issued by 62 critics of Pope Francis including Bishop René Henry Gracida of Corpus Christi, Bishop Bernard Fellay of the Society of Saint Pius X, and Joseph Shaw, the chairman of the Latin Mass Society. Among Francis's most notable critics is

Archbishop Carlo Maria Viganò a former apostolic nuncio who claimed in an open letter that Francis "knew from at least June 23, 2013 that Theodore McCarrick was a serial predator. He knew that he was a corrupt man, he covered for him to the bitter end." McCarrick submitted his resignation from the College of Cardinals in July 2018, which was quickly accepted by Francis. Francis ordered McCarrick to a life of prayer and penance until a canonical trial could be held. After a church investigation and trial, he was found guilty of sexual crimes against adults and minors and abuse of power, and was dismissed from the clergy in February 2019. McCarrick is the most senior church official in modern times to be laicized – commonly referred to as defrocking – and is believed to be the first cardinal ever laicized for sexual misconduct. On 9 May 2019, Francis issued the *motu proprio* *Vos estis lux mundi*, establishing new procedural norms to combat sexual abuse and to ensure that bishops and religious superiors are held accountable for their actions. On 2 August 2018, it was announced that the Catechism of the Catholic Church would be revised to state that the Church teaches that "the death penalty is inadmissible because it is an attack on the inviolability and dignity of the person". A full letter to the bishops regarding the change stated that it was consistent with the previous teachings of the Catholic Church regarding the dignity of human life, and that it reflected how modern society had better prison systems with a goal of criminal rehabilitation that made the death penalty unnecessary for the protection of innocent people. Within two weeks, 45 Catholic scholars and clergy signed an appeal to the cardinals of the Catholic Church, calling on them to advise Pope Francis to retract the recent revision made to the Catechism, on the grounds that its appearance of contradicting scripture and traditional teaching is causing scandal. In October 2019, a Synod of Bishops for the Pan-Amazon region was held in Vatican City "to identify new paths for the evangelization of God's people in that region", specifically the indigenous peoples who are "often forgotten and without the prospect of a serene future". The synod considered the issues of married *viri probati* priests and allowing the institution of deaconesses. The Amazon synod also drew attention after accusations of idolatry arose after videos from the synod featuring statues, allegedly of the Andean fertility goddess Pachamama, surfaced online. On 21 October 2019, Alexander Tschugguel removed several Pachamama statues from Santa Maria in Transpontina, took them to Ponte Sant'Angelo, and threw them into the River Tiber. Pope Francis responded by denouncing the removal of the statues and stating that the statues had been kept at the church "without idolatrous

intentions." In November 2019, a group of 100 conservative and traditionalist Catholics accused Francis of indulging in "sacrilegious and superstitious acts" during the synod. On 2 February 2020, Francis published the apostolic exhortation *Querida Amazonia*, ignoring the question of married priests, calling for women to be given greater roles in the Church, but not within the holy orders of the diaconate or the priesthood, and promoting enculturation with a request that the faithful "respect native forms of expression in song, dance, rituals, gestures and symbols". In March 2020 all public masses were suspended in Vatican City and Italy due to the corona virus pandemic. These suspensions began in late-February in the Archdioceses of Milan and Venice and were extended to the rest of the Italian peninsula on 8 March. Setting an example for churches unable to celebrate public masses due to the lockdown, Pope Francis began live streaming daily masses from his home at Domus Sanctae Marthae on 9 March. Outside Italy, masses in cities around the world were suspended in the days that followed. At the height of the outbreak in Italy, on 27 March, Pope Francis imparted the *Urbi et Orbi* blessing, normally reserved for Christmas and Easter, from an empty Saint Peter's Square following a prayer for the health of the entire world.

For the prayer service, Francis brought the crucifix from San Marcello al Corso which had processed through the streets of Rome during the miraculous plague cure of 1522. The prayer service concluded with Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, as church bells were rung and sirens blared across Rome. The spread of COVID-19 soon slowed in Italy and public masses were allowed to resume on 18 May, with Pope Francis celebrating his last daily live stream mass and first public mass since the lockdown on the centenary of the birth of Pope John Paul II. In July 2021, Francis abrogated portions of the *motu proprio Summorum Pontificum* with the promulgation of the *motu proprio Traditionis custodes*, restricting the permission of priests to offer the Traditional Latin Mass unless they have permission from their bishop. In March 2022, Francis promulgated the apostolic constitution *Praedicate evangelium*, reforming the Roman Curia and allowing lay Catholics to lead dicasteries. (Wikipedia: Christianity in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Edition of 8/12/2023. Accessed 23/12/2023).

## Eastern Orthodox

In the Eastern Orthodox, activities centers on their great council the Pan-Orthodox. The Pan-Orthodox Council, officially styled the Holy and Great

Synod, opened at Crete, on 19 June 2016. The 10 Churches that sent representatives to Crete were the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople and the Orthodox Churches of Alexandria, Jerusalem, Serbia, Romania, Greece, Eastern Orthodoxy Poland, Albania, Cyprus and the Czech Lands and Slovakia. Of the 14 national Orthodox churches, four did not attend the event, including the Russian Orthodox Church, the Georgian and Bulgarian Orthodox Churches, as well as the Orthodox Church of Antioch. The Council concluded on 26 June 2016, the Sunday of All Saints, with a Patriarchal Concelebration.

2018 Moscow–Constantinople schism: Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew (left) handing the tomos of autocephaly to Metropolitan Epiphanius (right), January 6, 2019. On 11 October 2018, the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople announced it would grant autocephaly to the "Church of Ukraine" thus separating it from the canonical jurisdiction of the Moscow Patriarchate. Four days later, the Moscow Patriarchate broke the communion with the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople over the latter's endorsement of the Ukrainian Orthodox church's autocephaly. The decision was made following a meeting of the Russian Holy Synod in Minsk, the capital of Belarus. Metropolitan Hilarion announced that the Moscow Patriarchate had taken the decision to "rupture full communion with the Constantinople Patriarchate", meaning that priests from the two churches will not be able to serve together while worshippers of one cannot take communion in the other. Two months later, on 15 December 2018, a unification council was convoked by the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople at St Sophia's Cathedral in Kyiv, during which the Kyiv Patriarchate, the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church and parts of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate) were united into a single church: the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. Metropolitan Epiphanius was elected the first Metropolitan of Kyiv and All Ukraine of the newly unified Ukrainian church. Patriarch Kirill of Moscow denounced the new Ukrainian Church as "a union of two schismatic groups." On 5 January 2019, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew signed a tomos officially granting autocephaly to the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. The tomos was signed at St. George's Cathedral in the presence of Petro Poroshenko, the President of Ukraine, and was presented to Metropolitan Epiphanius to be brought to Kyiv in time for Christmas, the first liturgy celebrated by the united Ukrainian Orthodox Church. On 30 May 2019, Vladimir Legoyda, head of the Synodal Department for Church, Society and Media Relations of the ROC, said

the ROC was aware of the efforts of the Church of Cyprus primate, Chrysostomos II, and added that "to some extent [Chrysostomos'] actions can be considered in line with the ROC proposal. He has consistently held talks with representatives from various local Churches, telling of the need to resolve the problem" Legoyda also said the ROC "has repeatedly stressed the desire and the need for a pan-Orthodox decision on this issue because it cannot be resolved unilaterally" On 12 October 2019, the Orthodox Church of Greece, headed by the Archbishop Ieronymos II recognized the Autocephaly of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine, stating that "the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople has the right to granting autocephalies". On 8 November 2019, the Patriarchate of Alexandria, ranked second in the diptych of the Eastern Orthodox Churches of the world, officially announced it had recognised the Orthodox Church of Ukraine, and Patriarch Theodore II of Alexandria formally recognised the Autocephaly granted by the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople to the Orthodox Church of Ukraine earlier that year. On 24 October 2020, the primate of the Church of Cyprus, Archbishop Chrysostomos II, commemorated Epiphanius of Ukraine during the Divine Liturgy, thus recognising the Orthodox Church of Ukraine.

Hagia Sophia and Chora Church: In early July 2020, the Turkish Council of State annulled the Cabinet's 1934 decision to establish the museum, revoking the monument's status, and a subsequent decree by Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan ordered the reclassification of Hagia Sophia as a mosque. The 1934 decree was ruled to be unlawful under both Ottoman and Turkish law as Hagia Sophia's waif, endowed by Sultan Mehmed, had designated the site a mosque; proponents of the decision argued the Hagia Sophia was the personal property of the sultan. This re-designation is controversial, invoking condemnation from the Turkish opposition, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I of Constantinople, UNESCO, the World Council of Churches, the International Association of Byzantine Studies, and many international leaders. In November 2019, the Turkish Council of State, Turkey's highest administrative court, ordered that Chora Church was to be reconverted to a mosque. In August 2020, its status changed to a mosque. The move to convert Chora Church into a mosque was condemned by the Greek Foreign Ministry and Christians. This caused a sharp rebuke by Turkey. Archdiocese of Ohrid the President of North Macedonia expressed his hope and expectation for a final settlement of the administrative status of his country's church in the near future



through the granting of an Autocephaly Tomos by the Ecumenical Patriarchate, stressing that the completion of the autocephaly of the church of North Macedonia is a top national interest. The Holy and Sacred Synod of Constantinople convened Monday May 9, 2022, under the chairmanship of Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, and discussed extensively the ecclesiastical matter of Skopje. Having assessed in its final stage the petition of appeal of that Church to the Mother Church, along with the repeated pleas of the State of North Macedonia, the Ecumenical Patriarchate announced that it welcomes in Eucharistic communion "the hierarchy, clergy, and people of this Church under Archbishop Stefan." It makes clear that it excludes the term "Macedonian" and any other derivative of the word "Macedonia", and recognizes the name of the Church as "Ohrid". Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew clarified that it was up to the Church of Serbia to settle the administrative issues between it and the Church in North Macedonia. He promises to continue to be interested in the progress and stability of the Ohrid ecclesiastical entity. The Serbian Orthodox Church accepted the request of the Church of North Macedonia to acquire autocephaly. On May 24, 2022, the Patriarch of Serbia and the Archbishop of Ohrid co-officiated the Divine Liturgy for the feast of Saints Cyril and Methodius at the Cathedral of Saint Clement of Ohrid in Skopje. Mars Hill Church, part of the emerging church movement, closed in 2015 (Wikipedia: Christianity in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Edition of 8/12/2023. Accessed 23/12/2023).

## Protestants

Mega churches Postmodern Christianity has influenced the emerging church movement, with Protestantism proponents challenging the mainstream Christianity on issues such as: institutional structures, systematic theology, propositional teaching methods, a perceived preoccupation with buildings, an attractional understanding of mission, professional clergy, and a perceived preoccupation with the political process and unhelpful jargon ("Christian-ese"). Globally, mega churches are a significant development in Protestant Christianity. In the United States, the phenomenon has more than quadrupled in the past two decades. It has since spread worldwide. In 2007, five of the ten largest Protestant churches were in South Korea. The largest mega church in the United States is Lakewood Church in Houston, Texas with more than 40,000 members every weekend and the current largest mega church in the world is South Korea's Yoido Full Gospel Church, an Assemblies of God church, with

more than 830,000 members as of 2007. Mark Driscoll, a leader in the emerging church movement, had more than 12,000 followers at Mars Hill Church in Seattle, Washington before controversy led to Driscoll's resignation in 2014 and Mars Hill's dissolution. Like other churches in the emerging church movement, Mars Hill combined alternative worship with Calvinist theology. In 2015, not without controversy, a video featuring Driscoll was featured at a Hillsong Church conference in Sydney, Australia. Hillsong Church is a mega church, founded in 1983, that has grown to over 100,000 followers. Their 2013 song "Oceans (Where Feet May Fail)" was released and spent 61 weeks atop the Billboard Hot Christian Songs chart, longer than any other song. Some mega churches, including Lakewood and Yoido Full, teach prosperity theology, a controversial doctrine seen as a heresy by most Christians. In 2007, U.S. Senator Chuck Grassley opened a probe into the finances of six televangelism ministries that promoted prosperity theology: Kenneth Copeland Ministries, Creflo Dollar Ministries, Benny Hinn Ministries, Bishop Eddie Long Ministries, Joyce Meyer Ministries, and Paula White Ministries. In January 2011, Grassley concluded his investigation stating that he believed self-regulation by religious organizations was preferable to government action. Only the ministries led by Meyer and Hinn cooperated with Grassley's investigation. The inauguration of Donald Trump as the 45th President of the United States in 2017 featured prayers from two preachers known for advocating prosperity theology. Paula White, one of Trump's spiritual advisers, gave the invocation. The heterodox Shincheonji mega church was the source of the COVID-19 pandemic in South Korea, with most cases in South Korea being tied to the spread of the SARS-CoV-2 virus within the mega church. On 1 March 2020, Seoul mayor Park Won-soon announced that the Seoul City Government had made a criminal complaint about the church's pastor Lee Man-hee, whom Shincheonji adherents believed to be the messiah, asking for an investigation into him and twelve others connected to the sect on charges of murder by negligence and violations of the Disease Control Act, citing their negligence in preventing an outbreak among their congregants and their refusal to cooperate with the government throughout the crisis. (Wikipedia: Christianity in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Edition of 8/12/2023. Accessed 23/12/2023).

## Anglican Communion

According to Christianity in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century the following took place within the Anglican Church. Major activities revolve around the Lambeth Conference. It is the ten-yearly gathering of Anglican Communion bishops, a seven day conference of conservative Anglican bishops and leaders held in Jerusalem from 22 to 29 June 2008 to address the growing controversy of the divisions in the Anglican Communion, the rise of secularism, as well as concerns with HIV/AIDS and poverty. As a result of the conference, the Jerusalem Declaration was issued and the Fellowship of Confessing Anglicans was created. The conference participants also called for the creation of the Anglican Church in North America (ANCA), as an alternative to the Episcopal Church in the United States and the Anglican Church of Canada, and declared that recognition by the Archbishop of Canterbury is not necessary to Anglican identity. Follow-up conferences have been held every five years since 2008. The conventions of four dioceses of the Episcopal Church voted in 2007 and 2008 to leave that church and to join the Anglican Church of the Southern Cone of America. Twelve other jurisdictions, serving an estimated 100,000 persons at that time, formed the ACNA on December 3–4, 2008. The ACNA is seeking official recognition as a province within the Anglican Communion. The Anglican Church of Nigeria declared itself in communion with the new church in March 2009 and the Fellowship of Confessing Anglicans

recognized it as well. In June 2009, the Anglican Church of Uganda also declared itself in full communion with ACNA, and the Anglican Church of Sudan followed suit in December 2011. Two of the major events which contributed to the Anglican realignment were the 2002 decision of the Diocese of New Westminster in Canada to authorise a rite of blessing for same-sex unions, and the nomination of two openly gay priests in 2003 to become bishops. Jeffrey John, an openly gay priest with a long-time partner, was appointed to be the next Bishop of Reading in the Church of England and the General Convention of the Episcopal Church ratified the election of Gene Robinson, an openly gay noncelibate man, as Bishop of New Hampshire. Jeffrey John ultimately declined the appointment due to pressure. (Wikipedia: Christianity in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Edition of 8/12/2023. Accessed 23/12/2023).

### United Methodist Church

Like many other mainline Protestant denominations in the United States, the United Methodist Church (UMC) has experienced significant membership losses in recent decades. By the opening of the 2008 General Conference, total UMC membership was estimated at 11.4 million, with about 7.9 million in the US and 3.5 million overseas. Significantly, about 20 percent of the conference delegates were from Africa, with Filipinos and Europeans making up another 10 percent. During the conference, the delegates voted to finalize the induction of the

Methodist Church of the Ivory Coast and its 700,000 members into the denomination. One Congolese bishop has estimated that typical Sunday attendance of the UMC is higher in his country than in the entire United States. Given current trends in the UMC, with overseas churches growing, especially in Africa, and US churches collectively losing about 1,000 members a week, American influence on the UMC is declining. In February 2019, a Special Session of the General Conference of the United Methodist Church was held in St. Louis, Missouri, to examine church teachings on human sexuality. While most American delegates at the General Conference supported the One Church Plan, a resolution that would have made the UMC open and affirming on LGBT issues, allowing individual conferences to allow same-sex marriage and openly gay clergy, the resolution failed. In its place, the Traditional Plan, opposed by most American delegates but supported by the African delegates, was passed by the conference. The Traditional Plan reaffirms traditional teachings on sexuality, penalizes UMC clergy who conduct same- sex marriages or ordain openly gay clergy beginning in 2020. Some conferences have allowed both same-sex marriage and openly gay clergy for years. One conference in the American Southwest has a lesbian bishop, Karen Oliveto. It is unknown how these clergy will be affected by the rule change. A similar General Conference decision in 1984 led to the early retirement of some openly gay clergy, including Paul Abels. Many progressive clergy have vowed to ignore the new

rules if and when they come into effect, and many clergy and congregations are openly contemplating the idea of a schism within the United Methodist Church. With the Traditional Plan in place, the UMC increasingly saw schism as inevitable and so plans were drawn up to be voted upon at 2020 General Conference. However, due to the corona virus pandemic, the General Conference was delayed to 2021. (Wikipedia: Christianity in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Edition of 8/12/2023. Accessed 23/12/2023).

### Coptic Church

In April 2006, one person was killed and twelve injured in simultaneous knife Oriental Orthodoxy attacks on three Coptic churches in Alexandria. In November 2008, several thousand Muslims attacked a Coptic church in a suburb of Cairo on the day of its inauguration, forcing 800 Coptic Christians to barricade themselves in. In April 2009, two Christian men were shot dead and another was injured by Muslim men after an Easter vigil in the south of Egypt. On 18 September 2009, a Muslim man named Osama Araban beheaded a Coptic Christian man in the village of Bagour, and injured 2 others in 2 different villages. He was arrested the following day. On the eve of 7 January 2010, as worshippers were leaving the MarYuhanna (St. John) church in Nag Hammadi after Eastern Christmas Mass(which finishes around midnight), three Muslim men in a car opened fire, killing 8 Christians and injuring another 10. On New Year's Day 2011, just 20 minutes after midnight as Christians were leaving a Coptic Orthodox Church in the city of Alexandria after a New Year's Eve service a car bomb exploded in front of the Church killing more than 23 and injuring more than 75. In Tahrir Square, Cairo, on Wednesday 2 February 2011, Coptic Christians joined hands to provide a protective cordon around their Muslim neighbours during Salah (prayers) in the midst of the 2011 Egyptian Revolution. On 7 May 2011, an armed group of Islamists, including Salafists, attacked and set fire to two churches including Saint Menas Coptic Orthodox Christian Church and the Coptic Church of the Holy Virgin, in

Cairo. The attacks resulted in the deaths of 12 people and more than 230 wounded. It is reported that the events were triggered by a mixed marriage between a Christian woman and a Muslim man. On 17 March 2012, the Coptic Orthodox Pope, Shenouda III died, leaving many Copts mourning and worrying as tensions rose with Muslims. Shenouda III had constantly met with Muslim leaders in order to create peace. Many were worried about Muslims controlling Egypt, as the Muslim Brotherhood had won 70% of the parliamentary elections. Tawadros II was elected Pope on 4 November 2012. In February 2015, twenty-one Coptic Christians were kidnapped and beheaded in Libya by ISIS insurgents. Six days later, they were canonized as martyrs by Pope Tawadros II. Cathedral of the Nativity in Cairo, the largest church in the Middle East, was consecrated in 2019. In January 2017, following twin terrorist attacks that killed at least 27 Coptic Egyptians at St. Peter and St. Paul's Church in Cairo in December 2016, the President of Egypt Abdel Fattah el-Sisi commissioned the construction of the country's largest mosque and church in the new administrative capital to become symbols of coexistence and national unity. For decades, the building of churches in Egypt was restricted to avoid offending Islam. The Cathedral of the Nativity in Cairo was inaugurated on 6 January 2019 by President el-Sisi and Pope Tawadros II. On the same day of the inauguration, Divine Liturgy was celebrated in the chapel of the cathedral with the participation of some 3,000 people that included representatives from all over the country. (Wikipedia: Christianity in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Edition of 8/12/2023. Accessed 23/12/2023).

## Armenian Church

The construction of the Holy Mother of God Cathedral in Stepanakert, Nagorno-Karabakh began in 2006. In October 2013 Father Asoghik Karapetyan, the director of the Museum of the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin, stated on television that an atheist Armenian is not a "true Armenian". A spokesperson for the Armenian Apostolic Church stated that it is his personal view. The statement received considerable criticism, though Asoghik did not retract his statement. In an editorial in the liberal Aravot daily Aram Abrahamyan suggested that religious identity should not be equated with national (ethnic) identity and it is up to every individual to

decide whether they are Armenian or not, regardless of religion. According to a 2018 survey by the Pew Research Center, in Armenia 82% of respondents say it is very or somewhat important to be a Christian to be truly Armenian. On 24 April 2015, the Armenian Apostolic Church canonized all of the victims of the Armenian genocide as martyrs, which began a hundred years prior to the following day on 24 April 1915; this service is believed to be the largest canonization service in history. It was the first canonization by the Armenian Apostolic Church in four hundred years. On 26 September 2017, a deaconess was consecrated in the Tehran Diocese of the Armenian Apostolic Church, the first Armenian deaconess in a hundred years. On 3 October 2019, Turkish newspaper Hürriyet reported on a 2012 lawsuit advancing through Turkish courts; the lawsuit was filed by Patriarch Nourhan Manougian of Jerusalem in an attempt to reclaim patriarchate property confiscated by the Turkish government during the Armenian genocide in 1915. According to the Patriarch Manougian the Armenian Patriarchate in Jerusalem owned around 1,200 properties in Istanbul alone prior to the genocide. The court had originally dismissed the case in 2012, despite the patriarchate winning an appeal, but a decision from the Constitutional Court of Turkey ruled on 12 September 2019 that the previous court had violated the rights of the patriarchate. A wedding held at Ghazanchetsots Cathedral after the church was bombed Amidst the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh War, on 8 October 2020, the mother church of Artsakhtsi Christians Ghazanchetsots Cathedral in Shushi was bombed by the Azerbaijani Armed Forces. Archbishop Pargev Martirosyan of Artsakh compared the shelling with the actions of Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, saying "They are bombarding our spiritual values, when we are restoring and preserving mosques". Another priest at the cathedral said "I feel the pain that the walls of our beautiful cathedral are destroyed. I feel the pain that today the world does not react to what's happening here and that our boys are dying defending our Motherland" (Wikipedia: Christianity in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Edition of 8/12/2023. Accessed 23/12/2023).

## Ethiopian Church

In the Ethiopian Church, the 5<sup>th</sup> patriarch of the Church, Patriarch Abune Paulos died on 16 August 2012, followed four days later by Ethiopian Prime Minister



Meles Zenawi. On 28 February 2013, a college of electors assembled in Addis Ababa and elected Abune Mathias to be the 6th Patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. On 25 July 2018, delegates from the Patriarchate in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia and those in the United States, declared reunification in Washington, D.C., with the assistance of Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiya Ahmed. Declaring the end of a 26 year old schism, which began in 1991 when the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front seized power in Ethiopia and exiled the patriarch, the Church announced that it now acknowledges two patriarchs: Abune Merkorios, the 4th Patriarch of Ethiopia, and Abune Mathias, the 6th Patriarch of Ethiopia. (Wikipedia: Christianity in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Edition of 8/12/2023. Accessed 23/12/2023).

#### Eritrean Church

The first Patriarch of the newly independent Eritrean Orthodox Tewahedo Church, Abune Phillipos, died in 2002 and was succeeded by Abune Yacob. The reign of Abune Yacob as Patriarch of Eritrea was very brief as he died not long after his enthronement, and he was succeeded by Abune Antonios as the 3rd Patriarch of Eritrea. Abune Antonios was elected on 5 March 2004, and enthroned as the third Patriarch of Eritrea on 24 April 2004. Coptic Pope Shenouda III of Alexandria presided at the ceremony in Asmara, together with the Holy Synod of the Eritrean Orthodox Church and a Coptic Orthodox Church delegation. In August 2005,

Abune Antonios, the Patriarch of the Eritrean Orthodox Tewahedo Church, was confined to a strictly ceremonial role. In a letter dated 13 January 2006, Patriarch Abune Antonios was informed that following several sessions of the church's Holy Synod, he had been formally deposed. In a written response that was widely published, the Patriarch rejected the grounds of his dismissal, questioned the legitimacy of the synod, and excommunicated two signatories to the 13 January 2006 letter, including Yoftahe Dimetros, whom the Patriarch identified as being responsible for the church's recent upheavals. Patriarch Antonios also appealed his case to the Council of the Monasteries of the Eritrean Orthodox Church and to the Coptic Orthodox Church of Alexandria. Abune Antonios was deposed by the Eritrean Holy Synod supposedly under pressure from the Eritrean government and he remains under house arrest. Abune Antonios was replaced by Abune Dioskoros as the 4th Patriarch of Eritrea. Many believe that Abune Antonios was wrongly deposed and still consider him Patriarch. Many Eritrean Orthodox followers disagree with the Eritrean government making decisions in religious matters. The ruling Patriarch Abune Dioskoros died on 21 December 2015. No successor has been elected to date and the seat of the patriarchate remains *sede vacante*. After the fall of Mosul, the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant demanded that Assyrian Christians living in the city Assyrian Church convert to Islam, pay tribute, or face execution, by 19 July 2014. Al-Baghdadi further noted that Christians who do not

agree to follow those terms must "leave the borders of the Islamic Caliphate" within a specified deadline. This resulted in a complete Assyrian Christian exodus from Mosul, marking the end of 1,600 years of continuous Christian presence. A church mass was not held in Mosul for the first time in 1,800 years. On 9 July 2017, Iraqi Prime Minister Haider Al-Abadi arrived in preparation to announce the full liberation of Mosul and reclaim the city after three years of ISIL control. (Wikipedia: Christianity in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Edition of 8/12/2023. Accessed 23/12/2023).

From the above highlights, we get a glimpse of the 21<sup>st</sup> century Church. We see power tussle, politics in the church, deaths, persecution, government involvement, disagreements, corruption of power and others.

Even from the highlighted points, we see that the church in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is beset with challenges. And the problems vary. Adegboyega Adejobi writing stated the followings as problems confronting the 21<sup>st</sup> century church

1. Widening gaps between cities and rural places due to rapid urbanization.
2. Corruption in government and corresponding neglect of rural places and populace with its attendant poverty, suffering and hardship.
3. Lack of relevant demographic data and general ignorance among Christians about missionaries and mission works.

4. Ever increasing gap between the rich and poor around the world.
5. Teaching on financial and material prosperity and emphasis on good living among 21st century Christians.
6. Wrong perception among city Christians that everywhere has been reached or covered because of the large crowds we see at church meetings and programmes.
7. Over-emphasis on city and mega-churches with its attendant deliberate neglect of rural areas by church leaders in church planting plans and budgets because they are not financially viable or profitable.
8. Fear of losing income by established churches.
9. Lack of definite and well-structured moral, spiritual and financial support for practicing missionaries and their families and fear of suffering such neglect by willing brethren.
10. Lack of information due to communication gaps between missionaries on the field and city brethren and church leaders.
11. Too rigid church structures, traditions and programmes.
12. Misplaced priorities of church leaders and lack of sense of urgency. (Missions and the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Church; Internet: Accessed on 27/12/2023).

**Brett McCracken discussed 21 issues as problems facing the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Church. I have quoted his discussion as below:**

**1) Biblical Illiteracy.** Biblical literacy is a huge problem in the American Church, and it makes many of the challenges on this list all the more challenging. Quite simply, people in churches (and even more so those not in churches) may pay lip service to the importance of the Bible, but by and large they do not read it or know it. Surveys have found that 82 percent of Americans think “God helps those who help themselves,” is a Bible verse. 12 percent think Joan of Arc was Noah’s wife. 50 percent of graduating high school students thinks Sodom and Gomorrah were husband and wife. It’s embarrassing, and there is much work to do.

**2) Presence.** Christians ought to be people of presence, connected to God and to one another through the inhabiting, unifying power of the Holy Spirit. But the 21st century world busies our lives and distracts us so that every moment pulls us away from presence. The church must reprioritize its vocation as presenters of God’s presence in the world, and to do so we must cultivate habits and liturgies that create the space and contours for that presence to be felt and known.

**3) Disembodied Tendencies.** The trajectory of technology is away from incarnational presence and toward disembodied experience. We increasingly live our lives via screens, streams, apps, phones. Our relationships are digital. This exacerbates existing Gnostic tendencies (a cerebral rather than embodied faith) and subtly deemphasizes the crucial physicality of the church, the “body of Christ” in the material and not just theoretical sense. Churches should find ways to encourage physical gatherings, the practice of the Lord’s Supper, meals together in neighbourhoods, bodily movement in worship, shaking hands and hugging each other, whatever it takes anything to re-sensitize people to the fleshly reality of the church in the world.

**4) Compartmentalization.** We live our mediated lives via windows and boxes. We chat with multiple people at a time, post one fragment of our

lives here and another there, consume visual media in one window and read the Bible in another. All of this makes it easier to fracture our lived experience into disconnected compartments, a process that wreaks havoc on our spiritual formation. Integrity is wholeness (integer = whole number), all parts of our lives integrated and reflective of the Lordship of Christ. Churches today must work extra hard to cultivate this.

**5) Boredom.** We are an antsy culture. Everything is fast-paced and harried; we can hardly remember which Netflix show we loved last month or which restaurant was the rage last year. We have short attention spans and get bored easily, and this poses a huge challenge to the church. The values of routine, tradition and stability that define the church are distasteful in our fidgety age. Churches are naturally tempted to use gimmicks and trendiness to solve this problem, but this is ill-advised. The tricky task of the church in the 21st century is to lead people to awe, wonder and worship without watering things down or constantly reinventing the wheel.

**6) Temptation to Reinvent the Wheel.** The boredom challenge leads to this challenge, to “rethink” church every couple years. The problem is endemic in American evangelicalism. It is exhausting to read the scores of books that come out every year that provide a new paradigm or prescription for a revived church. One is tempted to just become Catholic so as to avoid the nauseous glut of “The church must become \_\_\_\_\_ to survive” blog posts and book rants. In this sense I think the evangelical church should become a bit more Catholic, trusting a bit more in continuity rather than seeing every cultural change as an invitation to reinvent the wheel.

**7) Complexity.** Related to our temptation to reinvent the wheel is the temptation to complicate Christianity and church life. We see this in the 345 definitive “definitions” of the gospel that various authors and theologians set forth every year. We see it in the enormous staffs and array of programs that turn churches into bureaucratically complex corporations. Complexity is cumbersome. It impairs mission. Especially at a time when faithful churches will be increasingly exiled from mainstream culture, we need to become

leaner and more nimble. We need to rediscover the beauty of simplicity, focusing on the core practices and historic sacraments of the church. The more complicated we make the church, the less countercultural she is.

**8) Consumer Christians.** The ubiquity of consumerism in late capitalism has fully infiltrated the church, to the extent that “church shopping” and “what I got from the sermon” are things we say without thinking anything of it. People go to Sunday services to “get something.” They choose churches that “fit them” and match their checklist of preferences, just as one would choose a car or a new pair of jeans. But churches must challenge rather than cater to this mentality. Church is a place where members of a body come together for purposes beyond themselves. It’s an invitation to join Christ in what he is already doing in the world, not an invitation for Christ to affirm our self-actualization.

**9) The Temptation to Homogeneity.** The consumerism of contemporary Christianity has unsurprisingly led to churches that are more homogeneous than ever. When we go to churches that fit us (how we look, talk and worship) we will naturally be surrounded by people who look, talk and worship just like us. But homogeneity is not the biblical ideal. The power of the gospel is that of unifying diverse groups of people, breaking down the walls of hostility that naturally divide us (race, class, culture, gender, and music preference, whatever). At a time when social media allows us to curate feeds and surround ourselves with people who agree with us and confirm our biases, this work becomes even more difficult.

**10) The “Authenticity = Brokenness” Fallacy.** I wrote about this a few years ago and still believe it’s one of the biggest challenges currently facing the church. At the heart of it is an unbelief in change and a weak theology of sanctification, a problem that leads to claims of “this is just who I am” essentialism and immutability. Aren’t we a people of resurrection and hope? Isn’t the Spirit who raised Christ from the dead within us now? Our anaemic belief in change is coupled with a fetishising of brokenness, and it’s a toxic combination. Many Christians today are quite simply more compelled by sin

(though we call it “brokenness”) than we are with holiness, and that is a significant problem the church must address.

**11) The Idol of Autonomy.** Little poses a bigger threat to the church in 21st century western culture than the pervasive mind-set that individual people are the sole arbiters of their identity, morality and destiny. The “be and do whatever feels right to you” philosophy of expressive individualism is fundamentally at odds with Christianity, which calls us to bow to the lordship of Christ. Churches must counter this and disciple people to submit their convictions about themselves, however sincere and authentic they may be, to the authority of Jesus Christ as revealed to us in Scripture.

**12) Aversion to Commitment.** We live in a culture that is commitment averse. Millennials are the FOMO (“fear of missing out”) generation, preferring to keep options open rather than committing to something or someone and foreclosing other possibilities. We are the generation that has rendered RSVP-based party planning a futile endeavour. We are the generation that is opting to own homes at a far lower rate than previous generations did. 91% of us expect to stay in a job less than 3 years. We are far less likely to be affiliated with a religion or a political party than previous generations were, and we get married at lower rates and later in life than our parents and grandparents did. Naturally, this leads to weak (if any) commitment to the local church, which makes discipleship and true “long obedience” formation difficult. Against this backdrop, churches can be relevant not by reinforcing unencumbered individualism but by challenging people to connect and commit to the body of Christ.

**13) The Struggle for Balance in an Immoderate Age.** As the world becomes more and more polarized and less and less capable of nuance and complexity (favouring simple, sound bite answers and tweet able convictions), the church will increasingly struggle to resist oversimplifying or too neatly resolving important tensions and complex paradoxes (which often leads to heresy). Truth and love, Word and Spirit, Justification and sanctification, General and special revelation, Gathering and scattering for



mission, now and not yet, Churches must lean into the complexities and paradoxes of these things and try to seek healthy balance, tempting as it will be to claim “radical” and “extreme” positions so as to appeal to Generation Antsy.

**14) Social Media.** There are some positive things social media offers, but there are many things about it that pose challenges to the contemporary church. Chief among them is the challenge of posturing, per formative obsession that feeds pride and hypocrisy. But social media (and texting too!) also can complicate pastoral situations and make existing problems worse. Closely associated with social media, the allure of celebrity and “platform” has become pervasive in the 21st century and can destroy a church, particularly when pastors and leaders become more interested in impressing their “audience” than tending to the flock of God.

**15) The Need for Racial Reconciliation.** The church should be no haven for racism, and yet too often the church has let racial wounds fester and prejudice, (whether explicit or implicit) go unaddressed. The 21st church must not be on the side-lines in the work of justice, healing and reconciliation; she must actually lead these efforts. The most vibrant centers of global Christianity are not in western countries these days, and the face of western Christianity is becoming much more diverse. Churches that celebrate, embrace and embody this reality in their communities will thrive, while those that resist diversity and cling to their ethnocentric privilege will falter.

**16) Gender and Sexuality.** This is a vast area that encompasses a wide range of things (homosexuality, gender identity, marriage, divorce, egalitarian vs. complementarian gender roles, pornography, etc.), each of which could be its own category on this list. We are already seeing how this issue creates fragmentation within churches, denominations and Para-church organizations, and this will only continue. It will also be the primary issue that drives the cultural alienation of the church in the 21st century. The challenges are plenty here, with major theological and pastoral implications.

One of the biggest challenges for theologically conservative churches will be to maintain a consistent biblical ethic on these matters, speaking in truth and love about (for example) the witness of Scripture on divorce as much as the witness of Scripture on homosexuality.

**17) Religious Freedom.** The days are numbered for churches to freely conduct their affairs according to traditional beliefs and practices on issues of sexuality and gender, without government interference. The recent Massachusetts state law, which forces churches to allow transgender people to use church bathrooms and shower facilities of their choice, is just the tip of the iceberg. Churches will need to disentangle from the government to the extent that they can (return to house-churches?), or else figure out how to deal with inevitable legal/legislative challenges.

**18) Anti-Intellectualism.** It has been 21 years since Mark Noll's discouraging assessment in *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* (that "there is not much of an evangelical mind"), and while progress has been made there is still a lot of work to do in combating anti-intellectualism in the church. Too many churches do not encourage intellectual curiosity, vibrant debate and healthy questioning. They offer simplistic and unsatisfying answers to huge questions and in so doing they foreclose a whole arena (the life of the mind) wherein God can be worshipped and holy wonder cultivated.

**19) Hyper-Intellectualism.** The other end of the spectrum is a challenge as well. As important as apologetics, theological training and rigorous rational defences are for the faith, if our presentation of Christianity is entirely cerebral it is missing something. The church in the 21st century must embrace the mystery and embodied elements of Christianity, the experience of God rather than just the conception of Him. This means worship and church life will be messier, more emotional and more unpredictable than the rationalists would prefer, but it will be more powerful and I dare say more transformative.

**20) Distrust of Authority.** For many (very valid) reasons, younger generations today have a real distrust of authority. This makes church inherently challenging for them, not only because they have a hard time trusting leaders but (more importantly) they struggle with submitting fully to the authority of Christ and the authority of Scripture. Yet churches must lean into the “transcendent authority” of Christ, countercultural as that may be. As Russell Moore recently observed, “In an age suspicious of all authority outside the self, the appeal to a word that carries transcendent authority can be just distinctive enough to be heard, even when not immediately embraced.”

**21) Entanglements of Allegiances.** This has been a struggle for the church since her earliest days. In what sense does a person’s allegiance to empire or nation or some other secular community interact with their allegiance to Christ and his church? Today we’re seeing this play out in the messy entanglements of Christians in politics, to the point that we have to say out loud that trickle-down economics and the right to bear arms are political, not biblical values. Today’s focus on identity politics makes this even more challenging, as any given member of a church may see their Christian identity as secondary to some other identity (gender, race, political affiliation, nationality, etc.). Churches will have the messy task of acknowledging and respecting multifarious identities while also challenging people to prioritize them in the right way. (Brett McCracken, October 27, 2016. 21 Challenges Facing the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Church. Internet; Accessed on 26/12/2023).

Adegboyega Adejobi noted that,

The only way forward for the 21st century church to fully obey the scriptures, fulfil biblical prophecy and hasten the return of the Lord Jesus to earth is to take missions NOT as an optional extra but a task that MUST be done. The church therefore must incorporate missions as an integral part of her overall vision and adopt every postmodern strategy as well as channel all her resources in the same direction to achieve it. God’s word has not changed and neither has the Holy Spirit who directs the affairs of the Church

of Christ in the world today changed. To this end, the old strategy of mobilizing members of the church to ‘Go’, ‘Groan’ and ‘Give’ is still relevant. Although, an old strategy, it is bound to achieve great success if re-invigorated with all focus, sense of commitment, seriousness and purpose. It is said that, ‘where there is a will, there is a way’; if only we would see missions as important and urgent, give it all attention and divert as much of our resources as possible toward it, our testimony would change and several unreached people groups would soon be reached with gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. (Missions and the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Church; Internet: Accessed on 27/12/2023).

## **2.8 Why does God Resolve to Elect some and leave others?**

But why choose? This is one question that has been asked over the years. All of mankind is God’s creation. Why then does He choose others over against others who are equally His creation? Those not elected also hear the Gospel as it offers salvation in Jesus Christ by faith. The gospel offers them salvation. They hear the good news of salvation leading to eternal life through Christ. The elect and those not elected hear the gospel message together for the gospel message has never been selective. It comes to all mankind. But those selected for salvation hear and embrace the gospel truth with gladness, while those not elected hear but reject the truth turning deaf ears to the gospel message. But as to why God has chosen to elect others and leave out others, the scripture has not come out clearly to tell us the reasons. Boethner observed that, ‘Men have over the years tried to offer explanations by referring to the foresight of faith, universal grace that must be improved or some other rationalisations.... But the only probable answer seems to

be that man by virtue of his sinful corruption can and will do nothing for himself. Consequently, God, under no obligation to save any of his rebellious creatures, of His own free sovereign and holy will decides to save some and leave out others. Beyond this lies the mystery of the very nature and being of God Himself. Man may not and cannot go further than what God Himself has done (67). Apostle Paul said that man cannot call on God to answer for His divine actions or give explanations for His deeds. Rather man has to submit totally in obedience and humility to the divine will and revelation of God which He chooses to make known to man when he wrote “For who can resist His will? But who are you, a man, to answer back to God? Will what is moulded say to its moulder, ‘what have you made me thus?’ has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump to make one vessel for beauty and another for menial use; what if God, desiring to show His wrath and to make known His power, has endured with much patience the vessels of wrath made for destruction, in order to make known the riches of His glory for the vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory, even us whom He has called, not from the Jews only but also from the gentiles?” (Rom.9:19-24 RSV). The Bible earlier than Paul warned us against insisting on knowing that which God has not revealed. The Bible enjoins us to accept what is revealed to us in good faith wholeheartedly and not insist on knowing the unrevealed truths, plans and actions of God. Moses rightly wrote “The secret

things belong unto the Lord our God; but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law” (Deut.29:29).

## **2.9 Conclusion and Summary of the Review**

This section has reviewed the literature related to the topic of this research. The election of Israel is a widely considered and debated topic. In the review, we have seen that *bahar* the Hebrew word for election is very much used and implied in both the Old Testament and the New Testament. Election is of God and He does it out of His divine will and counsel. The nation of Israel is chosen purely based on God’s love and will. Israel has nothing to qualify her for being elected, hence cannot boast. The word *bahar* did not appear early in the Pentateuch but it is implied as early as Genesis 6:8, 13f, when Noah was chosen. And the issue of choice of individuals and groups for divine tasks runs throughout the Old Testament. The New Testament continues with this theme of election as Christ is elected and believers are elected with Him and in Him for salvation and to project God’s glory and enjoy the sweet favours from God. Man is seen as the object of God’s election. We also see the Church of Jesus Christ in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century occupied with the search for Church unity and the continuous confrontation to persecution and secularization. You will also realize from the review that the

technological advancement of the 21<sup>st</sup> century has opened ways for the Church to leverage on in its quest to carry out the divine task of bringing the Gospel message to the yet to be reached lands. The Church of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century is faced with a lot of challenges and yearning for solutions. One would discover that, much is said about election of Israel and the Church today, yet much remains to be said. In the review, the researcher considers an understanding of election, the election of Israel, why God chose Israel, purpose, grounds and responsibilities of Israel's election, election as seen in the Old Testament and in the New Testament, the election in Christ and the Church today. He closes with a section on why God chose some leaving out others.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **UNDERSTANDING THE HEBREW NATION, ISRAEL**

#### **3.1 Who is Israel?**

Israel is a Hebrew name which comes from the combination of two words ‘yish-ra’ meaning ‘to struggle’ and ‘El’ which is ‘God’. It is a gender neutral Hebrew name. It means God perseveres. It means fighter of God, triumphant with God. (Mounce). In Mounce the gender is given as neutral gender, but most commentators consider the name to be masculine in gender. According to Antonious H. J. Gunneweg, “Israel is a Theophorous name in which the proper name ‘El’ (God) is combined with the verb `srh as its subject. The OT gives this verb the sense of striving. The patriarch Jacob is called Israel because he had “striven with God” (767).

What Gunneweg says is what the Bible tells us. According to Biblical records, this name first is heard coming from the angel of the Lord. When Jacob had stayed for many years in his maternal home where he married and had children, God appeared to him in a dream and asked him to go back to his father’s house. His wives Leah and Rachel also advised him to leave his father-in-law’s house and take them to his father’s place as the angel had told him in the dream (Gen.31: 13-16). On his way from Laban’s house, he had a night at a place which



he named Penuel. We are told in Gen.32:24-28 that, “V24 And Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him until the breaking of the day. V25 when the man saw that he did not prevail against Jacob, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and Jacob’s thigh was put out of joint as he wrestled with him. V26 then he said, “Let me go, for the day is breaking”. But Jacob said to him ‘I will not let you go, unless you bless me’. V27. And he said to him “what is your name”. And he said, Jacob. V27 Then he said, “Your name shall no more be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with men, and have prevailed” from this point on, Jacob became known by this name. It is written on Wikipedia that “Israel (Hebrew, Modern: Yīśra’el, Tiberian: Yīsrā’ēl) is a Hebrew-language masculine given name. According to the Book of Genesis, the name was bestowed upon Jacob after the incident in which he wrestled with the angel (Genesis 32:28 and 35:10). The given name is already attested in Eblaite (Išrail) and Ugaritic (Yšr’il). Commentators differ on the original literal interpretation. The text of the Book of Genesis etymologizes the name with the root śarah (רָהַץ, "to rule, contend, have power, prevail over") תְּרִיצֵהוּ הַיְסֹדֶת (KJV: "a prince hast thou power with God"), but modern suggestions read the el as the subject, for a translation of "El rules/judges/struggles" or "El fights/struggles" The Jewish Study Bible of Oxford University Press says on page 68 "The scientific etymology of Israel is uncertain, a good guess being '[The God] El rules.'" implying God through the word for the

supreme deity of the Canaanite religion. Israel Pronunciation In English: /' ɪzri:əl, ' ɪzreɪ.əl/ In Hebrew: [jisʁa 'ʔel] (Modern), [jiʁa 'ʔɛli] (Biblical) Gender Male Origin Word/name Hebrew Meaning God Contended [1] Wrestles with God [2] Triumphant with God” (Accessed on 03/01/024).

It is agreeing that the name first appeared in the story of Jacob wrestling with a man at night on his way from Laban’s house. We can therefore conclude that Israel is another name for Jacob, the son of Isaac, the son of Abraham, son of Terah. Giving names to his elect is the nature of God. He changed Abram to Abraham, Sarai to Sarah, to mean father and mother of multitude of nations (Gen. 17: 4-6, 15-16). He gave Solomon the son born to David by Bathsheba the name Jedidiah, meaning ‘loved by God’ (2Sam. 12:24-25). There are several other cases where God gave names to people. So Jacob’s name meaning ‘liar’ was changed to Israel. From here on, he is referred to as Israel and later his descendants became a nation by the name Israel to this day. Elwell (1997), Hasel (1998) and Boyd (1958) writing separately agree that, Israel is God given name to Jacob, the second twin son of Isaac by Rebecca as recorded in the Bible. And his descendants are the nation of Israel in the present Middle East. On the modern state of Israel, Marriane Awerbuch wrote in Encyclopaedia of Christianity that,

“The state of Israel is named after the patriarch – Jacob-Israel, whose descendants were promised the holy land. From the time of Joshua until today, the land has had a continuous Jewish presence with the size of the

population in direct proportion to the friendliness toward Jews of the regime in power. The modern name Israel expresses the claim and self-understanding of the state. Its founding is seen as the realization of a political goal that was formulated in the Basel program of the first Zionist Congress (1897), namely a “Publicly guaranteed homeland for the Jewish people in the land of Israel (i.e. –Palestine), which found political recognition in the Balfour declaration of 1917. Politically, “Palestine” meant only land west of the Jordan River. In 1921 Transjordan was closed to Jewish settlement and was made the Emirate, later the kingdom of Jordan” (774-775).

We are to understand from the above that, the occupation of Palestine by the people of Israel is being resisted by the Arab Palestinians. The present state of Israel is living side by side with opposing Palestinians who are still seeing Israelites as infiltrators, immigrants and not as indigenes.

Awerbuch concluded that, “since its founding the State of Israel has had to deal with 50 years of conflict with its Arab neighbours. Peace treaties were only signed with the nation of Egypt in 1979, and Jordan in 1994. Since 2000, Syria, Iraq and Lebanon have remained officially at war with Israel. The result of the tension is from the ideology of an undisputable Jewish state, which is the main element in the unbroken historical thinking of the dispersion lands, made unfathomable by the unquenchable longing for Zion and the Messianic Hope of religious Jews. Gathering of her scattered people, Israel sees it as the noblest task that must be carried out. And it is only in Palestine, their God given land that the Jews have to be gathered and a history made out for her (Awerbuch, 776).

It is also important to state here that, since the 1960s, Israel has been at war with the Palestinians. A terror group called Hamas (probably backed and being trained by Iran -father of present world terrorism), has been attacking and terrorising Israel. Hamas is based in the Gaza strip. It trains her members and manufactures some of her weapons in Gaza. Hamas has built tunnels through which it carries out her nefarious acts of terror against Israel. As we speak, Israel is at war with Hamas. Hamas attacked a music party in Israel on the 7<sup>th</sup> October, 2023 killing over two thousand Israelites and other nationals including Americans. And since then the war is ragging on. And Lebanon and Syria have continued attacks on Israel. So today Israel is fighting Syria, Iran, Yemen, Lebanon and Hamas at the same time.

### **3.2 The Hebrew Nation**

Just what do we mean the Hebrew nation? Before we understand the term Hebrew nation, it's imperative to know what Hebrew alone stands for. Hebrew alone is a language. Herman Spieckermann in the Encyclopaedia of Christianity speaks of Hebrews as a group of people of questionable characters when he said,

The term "Hebrews- in Hebrew 'ibri (pl. Ibrim), in Ugaritic 'pr (pl. 'prm) in Egyptian 'pr (pl. 'pr.w), in Akkadian hab/piru (pl. hab/piru' ideogram lu.SA.GAZ with the broader reading habattu = robbers), in Greek Hebraios – common in the ancient Near East from the late third millennium B.C., designated people who had lost their position in society through war, debt,

criminal acts and so forth, who were organized in loose bands , and who offered their labour to foreign masters in return for recompense (508).

This view of Herman is not the only view. Majority of scholars differ with him. And the accepted view is that, Hebrew is originally a language. According to Yale University, Hebrew is a language, a Semitic language originally adopted by the ‘ibhri’, or Israelites, when they took possession of the land of Canaan west of the Jordan River in Palestine. The Hebrew language was also been called the speech of Canaan and Judean, after the kingdom of Judah. Ancient Hebrew which is the language of the Bible was succeeded by an intermediary form, Mishnaic Hebrew, about the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC. Modern Hebrew which is the only vernacular tongue based on an ancient written form, was developed fully in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries (Internet: Accessed on 05/01/2024).

In a similar vein, it is on record that ‘Hebrew belongs to the Canaanite group of languages. Canaanite languages are a branch of the Northwest Semitic family of languages. According to Avraham Ben-Yosef, Hebrew flourished as a spoken language in the kingdoms of Israel and Judah during the period from 1200 to 586 BCE’ (Internet: Accessed on 05/01/2024)

Zeidan Adam stated in his revised and updated article in Encyclopaedia Britannica that, ‘**Hebrew**, is any member of an ancient northern Semitic people that were the ancestors of the Jews. Biblical scholars use the term Hebrews to

designate the descendants of the patriarchs of the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament)—i.e., Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (also called Israel Genesis 32:28)—from that period until their conquest of Canaan (Palestine) in the late 2nd millennium BCE. Thenceforth these people are referred to as Israelites until their return from the Babylonian Exile in the late 6th century BCE, from which time on they became known as Jews.

In the Bible, the patriarch Abraham is referred to a single time as the *‘ivri*, which is the singular form of the Hebrew-language word for Hebrew (plural *‘ivrim*, or *‘ibrim*). But the term Hebrew almost always occurs in the Hebrew Bible as a name given to the Israelites by other peoples, rather than one used by them. For that matter, the origins of the term Hebrew itself is uncertain. It could be derived from the word *‘eber*, or *‘ever*, a Hebrew word meaning the “other side” and conceivably referring again to Abraham, who crossed into the land of Canaan from the “other side” of the Euphrates or Jordan River. The name Hebrew could also be related to the semi-nomadic Habiru people, who are recorded in Egyptian inscriptions of the 13th and 12th centuries BCE as having settled in Egypt (Zeidan Adam: Internet: Accessed on 05/01/2024).

We can therefore conclude that the Hebrew are the descendants of Israel who lived in Egypt as slaves but later came to possess the land of Canaan, and who

adopted the Hebrew language as their official language. The fact that they are called after the language is not peculiar to them. Many tribes of the world are known by their languages, though many tribes have their national or tribal names different from their languages. A good example of tribes with same name as tribal name and language name include: Yoruba, Tiv, Hausa, Ibo, Amhara, Zulu, Ibibio, Kanuri, French, and Portuguese, to mention these few. And so Israel to be called the Hebrews by the language they speak is not problematic.

### **3.2.1 Origin of the Hebrew Nation**

According to Wikipedia, The Hebrews (Hebrew: עִבְרִיִּים / עִבְרִים, Modern: 'Īvrīm / 'Īvrīyyīm, Tiberian: 'Ībrīm / 'Ībrīyyīm; ISO 259-3: ʕibrim / ʕibriyim) were an ancient Semitic-speaking people. Historians mostly consider the Hebrews as synonymous with the Israelites, with the term "Hebrew" denoting an Israelite from the nomadic era that preceded the establishment of the United Kingdom of Israel. However, in some instances, the designation "Hebrews" may also be used historically in a wider sense, referring to the Phoenicians or other ancient civilizations, such as the Shasu on the eve of the Late Bronze Age collapse, appearing 34 times within 32 verses of the Hebrew Bible. Some scholars regard "Hebrews" as an ethnonym, others do not. (The multiple modern connotations of ethnicity may not all map well onto the sociology of ancient Near-Eastern groups.)

By the time of the Roman Empire, the term Hebraios (Greek: Ἑβραῖος) could refer to the Jews in general (as Strong's Hebrew Dictionary puts it: "any of the Jewish Nation") or, at other times, specifically to those Jews who lived in Roman Judaea. Judaea was, from 135CE until 6CE, a Roman province. However, at the time of early Christianity, the term instead referred in Christian texts to Jewish Christians, as opposed to the Judaizers and to the gentile Christians. In Armenian, Georgian, Italian, Greek, the Kurdish languages, Old French, Serbian, Russian, Romanian, and a few other languages, the transfer of the name from "Hebrew" to "Jew" never took place, and "Hebrew" (or the linguistic equivalent) remains the primary word used to refer to an ethnic Jew.

With the revival of the Hebrew language since the 19th century and with the emergence of the Yishuv, the term "Hebrews" has been applied to the Jewish people of this re-emerging society in Israel or to the Jewish people in general (Internet: Accessed on 06/01/2024). From the explanation, the Hebrew are the descendants of Abraham even though some other nations were at times referred to by this name, but it has come to be a name designate for the Israelites. They had come to settle finally in Palestine and adopted the Hebrew language, so they are the people of the Hebrew and the term Hebrew fits them.



According to Hebrew Radio, The term Hebrew takes on a meaning of “crossing over” which is exemplified through Abram’s life’s journey. He was a man who no longer wanted to follow the ways of an idol-worshipping culture. Instead, he was a person who crossed over to seek God with all his might. Gen. 14:3. The modern-day connotation of a Hebrew is that Hebrews are Jewish. But as can be found in Scripture, Abram is not so restricted. Instead, Abram becomes Abraham—a father of multitude of nations and believer in a Living God.

From our viewpoint, Hebrews are people who chose to leave the culture of idol worship in order to seek Truth. They chose to seek God’s instructions and to believe in His Promises. They seek the Kingdom of Elohim, Yahweh, as their God. They are people who are learning to trust, believe, and hope in God (internet: Accessed on 06/01/2024).

For the people of Israel to be called Hebrew because they cross-over is something well thought-of. Meyer (1981) Strong (1958) Bright (1952) in their separate writings agrees with the Bible, that, Abram crossed-over from Ur to Palestine or Canaan and from gods to God. His descendants later crossed over from Palestine to live in Egypt. They crossed-over in Egypt after thirty years from free people into slavery. Led by Moses, they crossed over the sea of Reed on dry ground on rescue from servitude to the Egyptians for independent life in Canaan

(Ex. 14:21, 22). And Israel crossed-over the Jordan River to possess the land of Canaan (Jos. 3:14-17). If the term Hebrew became applied to them as a derogatory term as cross over people, it was not out of place because of the many instances of crossing over in their history. Hinson (1990) said, it is important to note that, their crossing overs were for their good for the reason that God was behind all of them, and so was always turning the tables to their advantage (34).

The people of Israel otherwise called the Hebrews are agreed to be the descendants of Abram son of Terah from Ur of the Chaldeans. To understand the history better we need to know who the fore fathers of the Hebrews were. And to that I will turn.

### **3.2.2 The Patriarchs**

The patriarchs in this case refer to the fathers to the nation of Israel. It refers to the founders of the nation. They are the parents through whom the nation of the Hebrew is traced. According to Edersheim (1887), Bright (1952), Hinson (1990), the stories about the Patriarchs is embedded in oral traditions which were handed down through many generations before the OT writers collected them into the book of Genesis. And sometimes two or more stories are fused together. But the writers were able to present that:

1. God appeared to Abraham and promised him descendants who would eventually be a great nation and this promise didn't fail but was fulfilled not immediately but much later.
2. That the Israelite nation was a covenanted people to God who were expected to undertake certain responsibilities and to enjoy certain favours.
3. God chose the land of Canaan to be the land for His special people Israel.
4. God works through all events and can bring good out of evil.

According to Rattey (1976), Rowley (1945), Bright (1967), Kaiser (1975), Fohrer (1968), Vaux (1978), the story of the Hebrew patriarchs begins in Ur of the Chaldees near the Persian Gulf. Terah the father to Abraham, Haran and Nahor, left Ur to go to Canaan, moving westward towards Haran. This city is mentioned on the clay tablet discovered in 1933 at an Amorite center from the nineteenth century B.C. at Mari on the Euphrates. Haran and other names seen on the tablets are mentioned in the book of Genesis as members of Terah's family. The connection of these is ambiguous but it shows how old the stories of the Patriarchs are.

This assertion is alluded to in the biblical records. Genesis 11: 27-31, tells us Terah left Ur after the death of his son Haran (father to Lot), taking with him Abram and Nahor, their wives and the rest of the family to go to Canaan. Terah on the way settled at Haran and died in Haran. The reason for not going to Canaan

again which was the place he wanted to go is not known. Probably he found consolation in the name of the place he settled, Haran, as it was the name of his late son.

It is on evidence that, Terah and his family worshipped idols like their contemporaries. Some suggest that Terah was an idol merchant and his children probably helped him in the business (Sachar, 1930; Cochrane, 1984; Kaufmann 1969). We can agree with the datum that the patriarchs worshipped idols because, back then in Palestine and the surrounding nations, gods were worshipped according to clans and for specific purposes (Kittel: 71)

Brown (1931), Bright (1952); Coats (1983); Soggin (1980); Pixley (1992); Ahlstrom(1993), agreed with the Biblical records that, the patriarchs were semi nomads living in tents, wandering up and down Palestine and it's border lands in search of seasonal pasture for their flocks and sometimes going as far as into Egypt and Mesopotamia. The patriarchs were not true bedu and so did not go deeply into the desert. They did not settle in towns or own lands except for specific purposes (Abraham bought a piece of land to bury Sarah, his wife - Gen.23). The patriarchs are not seen as camel nomads, but as ass nomads who narrowed their wanderings to settled places and environs.

The patriarchal story begins with Terah. But the more important patriarchs are Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. I shall consider the most important three beginning with Abraham.

### **3.2.2.1 Abraham**

According to the Biblical records, we first meet Abraham as Abram from the family of Terah, thus: Genesis 11:27 – 12:1 “This is the account of Terah. Terah became the father of Abram, Nahor and Haran. And Haran became the father of Lot. While his father Terah was still alive, Haran died in Ur of the Chaldeans, in the land of his birth. Abram and Nahor both married. The name of Abram's wife was Sarai, and the name of Nahor's wife was Milcah; she was the daughter of Haran, the father of both Milcah and Iscah. Now Sarai was barren; she had no children. Terah took his son Abram, his grandson Lot son of Haran, and his daughter-in-law Sarai, the wife of his son Abram, and together they set out from Ur of the Chaldeans to go to Canaan. But when they came to Haran, they settled there. Terah lived 205 years, and he died in Haran. The LORD had said to Abram, ‘Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you.’ ” This is the family line of Abraham up to his call by God.

Andre Parrot (with others like Bright, Coats, Sachar, Albrecht, in their separate writings agreeing), states that:

There can be no biography of Abraham in the ordinary sense. The most that can be done is to apply the interpretation of modern historical findings to biblical materials so as to arrive at a probable judgment as to the background and patterns of events in his life. This involves a reconstruction of the patriarchal age (of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph; early 2nd millennium BCE), which until the end of the 19th century was unknown and considered virtually unknowable. It was assumed, based on a presumed dating of hypothetical biblical sources, that the patriarchal narratives in the Bible were only a projection of the situation and concerns of a much later period (9th–5th century BCE) and of dubious historical value.

Several Theses were advanced to explain the narratives—e.g., that the patriarchs were mythical beings or the personifications of tribes or folkloric or etiological (explanatory) figures created to account for various social, juridical, or cultic patterns. However, after World War I, archaeological research made enormous strides with the discovery of monuments and documents, many of which date back to the period assigned to the patriarchs in the traditional account. The excavation of a royal palace at Mari, an ancient city on the Euphrates, for example, brought to light thousands of cuneiform tablets (official archives and correspondence and religious and juridical texts) and thereby offered exegesis a new basis, which specialists utilized to show that, in the biblical book of Genesis,

narratives fit perfectly with what, from other sources, is known today of the early 2nd millennium BCE but imperfectly with a later period. A biblical scholar in the 1940s aptly termed this result “the rediscovery of the Old Testament.”

Thus, there are two main sources for reconstructing the figure of father Abraham: the book of Genesis—from the genealogy of Terah (Abraham’s father) and his departure from Ur to Haran in chapter 11 to the death of Abraham in chapter 25—and recent archaeological discoveries and interpretations concerning the area and era in which the biblical narrative takes place. (Internet: Accessed on 08/01/2024).

On the book of Genesis as a source for reconstructing the story of Abraham, Parrot commented summarily thus: According to the Biblical account, Abram (“The Father or God Is Exalted”), who is later named Abraham (“The Father of Many Nations”), a native of Ur in Mesopotamia, is called by God (Yahweh) to leave his own country and people and journey to an undesignated land, where he will become the founder of a new nation. He obeys the call unquestioningly and (at 75 years of age) proceeds with his barren wife, Sarai, later named Sarah (“Princess”), his nephew Lot, and other companions to the land of Canaan (between Syria and Egypt).

There, the childless septuagenarian receives repeated promises and a covenant from God that his “seed” will inherit the land and become numerous nations. Eventually, he not only has a son, Ishmael, by his wife’s maidservant Hagar but has, at 100 years of age, by Sarah, a legitimate son, Isaac, who is to be the heir of the promise. Yet Abraham is ready to obey God’s command to sacrifice Isaac, a test of his faith, which he is not required to consummate in the end because God substitutes a ram. At Sarah’s death, he purchases the cave of Machpelah near Hebron, together with the adjoining ground, as a family burying place. It is the first clear ownership of a piece of the Promised Land by Abraham and his posterity. Toward the end of his life, he sees to it that his son Isaac marries a girl from his own people back in Mesopotamia rather than a Canaanite woman. Abraham dies at the age of 175 and is buried next to Sarah in the cave of Machpelah.

Abraham is pictured with various characteristics: a righteous man, with wholehearted commitment to God; a man of peace (in settling a boundary dispute with his nephew Lot), compassionate (he argues and bargains with God to spare the people of Sodom and Gomorrah), and hospitable (he welcomes three visiting angels); a quick-acting warrior (he rescues Lot and his family from a raiding party); and an unscrupulous liar to save his own skin (he passes off Sarah as his sister and lets her be picked by the Egyptian pharaoh for his harem). He appears as



both a man of great spiritual depth and strength and a person with common human weaknesses and needs. (Internet: Accessed on 08/01/2024).

Bright (1952) also wrote that, Israel's history began with Abraham. We are told that it was God that called Abraham from Ur of the Chaldean and promised him the land of Canaan. That call of redemption was the beginning of the worship of monotheism. The promises were later sealed by a covenant (Gen.15:7-12, 17-21) (95). Ginsberg (1966), Meyer, Edersheim, Soggin, in their separate writings, agree with Bright.

The Biblical narratives stand as the basis for the construction of the story of not just Abraham but all the other patriarchs and other figures in history.

Parrot wrote in large agreement with Noss, J. (1980), Bura D.O; Bright (1952), Baron S.W. (1952), Herman, S. (1971), Baker and Arnold (1999), Speiser (1967), Albrecht Alt (1966), Brandshow Robert, on extra Biblical evidence for the Abraham story that,

The saga of Abraham unfolds between two landmarks, the exodus from "Ur of the Chaldeans" (Ur Kasdim) of the family, or clan, of Terah and "the purchase of" (or "the burials in") the cave of Machpelah. Tradition seems particularly firm on this point. The Hebrew text, in fact, locates the departure specifically at Ur Kasdim, the

Kasdim being none other than the Kaldu of the cuneiform texts at Mari. It is manifestly a migration of which one tribe is the Centre. The leader of the movement is designated by name: Terah, who “takes them out” from Ur, Abram his son, Lot the son of Haran, another son of Terah, and their wives, the best known being Sarai, the wife of Abram. The existence of another son of Terah, Nahor, who appears later, is noted.

Most scholars agree that Ur Kasdim was the Sumerian city of Ur, today Tall al-Muqayyar (or Mughair), about 200 miles (300 km) southeast of Baghdad in lower Mesopotamia, which was excavated from 1922 to 1934. It is certain that the cradle of the ancestors was the seat of a vigorous polytheism whose memory had not been lost and whose uncontested master in Ur was Nanna (or Sin), the Sumero-Akkadian moon god. “They served other gods,” Joshua, Moses’ successor, recalled, speaking to their descendants at Shechem.

After the migration from Ur (c. 2000 BCE), the reasons for which are unknown, the first important stopping place was Haran, where the caravan remained for some time. The city has been definitely located in upper Mesopotamia, between the Tigris and the Euphrates rivers, in the Balikh valley and can be found on the site of the modern Haran in Turkey. It has been shown that Haran was a pilgrimage city, for it was a center of the Sin cult and consequently

closely related to the moon-god cult of Ur. The Mari tablets have shed new light on the patriarchal period, specifically in terms of the city of Harran.

There have been many surprising items in the thousands of tablets found in the palace at Mari. Not only are the Ḫapiru (“Hebrews”) mentioned but so also remarkably are the Banu Yamina (“Benjaminites”). It is not that the latter are identical with the family of Benjamin, a son of Jacob, but rather that a name with such a biblical ring appears in these extra biblical sources in the 18th century BCE. What seems beyond doubt is that these Benjaminites (or Yaminites, meaning “Sons of the Right,” or “Sons of the South,” according to their habits of orientation) are always indicated as being north of Mari and in Harran, in the Temple of Sin.

The Bible provides no information on the itinerary followed between Ur and Haran. Scholars think that the caravan went up the Euphrates, then up the Balikh. After indicating a stay of indeterminate length in Harran, the Bible says only that Terah died there, at the age of 205, and that Abraham was 75 when he took up the journey again with his family and his goods. This time the migration went from east to west, first as far as the Euphrates River, which they may have crossed at Carchemish, since it can be forded during low-water periods.

Here again, the Mari texts supply a reference, for they indicate that there were Benjaminites on the right bank of the river, in the lands of Yamhad (Aleppo), Qatanum (Qatna), and Amurru. Since the ancient trails seem to have been marked with sanctuaries, it is noteworthy that Nayrab, near Aleppo, was, like Haran and Ur, a center of the Sin cult and that south of Aleppo, on the road to Ḥamāh, there is still a village that bears the name of Benjamin. The route is in the direction of the “land of Canaan,” the goal of the journey.

If a stop in Damascus is assumed, the caravan must next have crossed the land of Bashan (the Ḥawrān of today), first crossing the Jabboq, then the Jordan River at the ford of Dāmiyā, and arriving in the heart of the Samaritan country, to reach at last the plain of Shechem, today Balāṭah, at the foot of the Gerizim and Ebal mountains. Shechem was at the time a political and religious center, the importance of which has been perceived more clearly as a result of recent archaeological excavations. From the mid-13th to the mid-11th century BCE, Shechem was the site of the cult of the Canaanite god Ba‘al-Berit (Lord of the Covenant). The architecture uncovered on the site by archaeologists would date to the 18th century BCE, in which the presence of the patriarchs in Shechem is placed.

The next stopping place was in Bethel, identified with present-day Baytīn, north of Jerusalem. Bethel was also a holy city, whose cult was centered on El, the Canaanite god par excellence. Its name does not lend itself to confusion, for it proclaims that the city is the bet, “house,” or temple, of El (God). The Canaanite sanctuary was taken over without hesitation by Abraham, who built an altar there and consecrated it to Yahweh, at least if the Yahwistic tradition in Genesis is to be believed.

Abraham had not yet come to the end of his journey. Between Shechem and Bethel he had gone about 31 miles (50 km). It was about as far again from Bethel to Hebron, or more precisely to the oaks of Mamre, “which are at Hebron” (according to the Genesis account). The location of Mamre has been the subject of some indecision. At the present time, there is general agreement in setting it 1.5 miles (3 km) northwest of Hebron at Rāmat al-Khalīl, an Arabic name which means the “Heights of the Friend,” the friend (of God) being Abraham.

Mamre marked the site of Abraham’s encampment, but this did not at all exclude episodic travels in the direction of the Negeb, to Gerar and Beersheba. Life was a function of the economic conditions of the moment, of pastures to follow and to find, and thus the patriarchs moved back and forth between the land of

Canaan and the Nile River delta. They remained shepherds and never became cultivators.

It was in Mamre that Abraham received the revelation that his race would be perpetuated, and it was there that he learned that his nephew Lot had been taken captive. The latter is an enigmatic episode, an “erratic block” in a story in which nothing prepared the way for it. Suddenly, the life of the patriarch was inserted into a slice of history in which several important persons (“kings”) intervene: Amraphel of Shinar, Arioch of Ellasar, Ched-or-laomer of Elam, and Tidal of Goiim. Scholars of previous generations tried to identify these names with important historical figures—e.g., Amraphel with Hammurabi of Babylon—but little remains today of these suppositions. The whole of chapter 14 of Genesis, in which this event is narrated, differs completely from what has preceded and what follows. It may be an extract from some historical annals, belonging to an unknown secular source, for the meeting of Melchizedek, king of Salem and priest of God Most High (El ‘Elyon), and Abraham is impressive. The king-priest greets him with bread and wine on his victorious return and blesses him in the name of God Most High.

In this scene, the figure of the patriarch takes on a singular aspect. How is his religious behaviour to be characterized? He swears by “the Lord God Most

High”—i.e., by both Yahweh and El ‘Elyon. It is known that, on the matter of the revelation of Yahweh to man, the Biblical traditions differ. According to what scholars call the Yahwistic source (J) in the Pentateuch (the first five books of the Bible), Yahweh had been known and worshipped since Adam’s time. According to the so-called Priestly source (P), the name of Yahweh was revealed only to Moses. It may be concluded that it was probably El whom the patriarchs, including Abraham, knew.

As noted before, in Mesopotamia the patriarchs worshipped ‘other gods.’ On Canaanite soil, they met the Canaanite supreme god, El, and adopted him, but only partially and nominally, bestowing upon him qualities destined to distinguish him and to assure his preeminence over all other gods. He was thus to become El ‘Olam (God the Everlasting One), El ‘Elyon (God Most High), El Shaddai (God, the One of the Mountains), and El Ro’i (God of Vision). In short, the god of Abraham possessed duration, transcendence, power, and knowledge. This was not monotheism but monolatry (the worship of one among many gods), with the bases laid for a true universalism. He was a personal god too, with direct relations with the individual, but also a family god and certainly, still a tribal god. Here truly was the “God of our fathers,” who in the course of time was to become the “God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.”

It is not surprising that this bond of the flesh should still manifest itself when it came to gathering together the great ancestors into the family burial chamber, the cave of Machpelah. This place is venerated today in Hebron, at the Ḥaram al-Khalīl (Holy Place of the Friend), under the mosque. Abraham, “the friend of God,” was forevermore the depositary of the promise, the beneficiary of the Covenant, sealed not by the death of Isaac but by the sacrifice of the ram that was offered up in place of the child on Mount Moriah.(Internet: Accessed on 08/01/2024)

Hebrew radio states that, Abram was born in the city of Ur in early Babylon—His father sold idols. We find that Abram’s genealogy goes back to a man named Eber—a great-grandson of Noah. The designation of “Hebrew” refers to the fact that Abram descended from Eber and that he came from the “other side” (ever) of the Euphrates River.

The term Hebrew as it later applies to Abraham and his descendants, takes on a meaning of “crossing over” which is exemplified through Abram’s life’s journey. He was a man who no longer wanted to follow the ways of an idol-worshipping culture. Instead, he was a person who crossed over to seek God with all his might (Gen. 14:3).



The modern-day connotation of a Hebrew is that Hebrews are Jewish. But as can be found in Scripture, Abram is not so restricted. Instead, Abram becomes Abraham—a father of many nations and believes in a Living God (Internet: Accessed on 06/01/2024)

When one compares the Biblical record with the Archaeological and other extra Biblical records, as far as the story of Abraham is concerned, there is little disagreement. The archaeological findings and or discoveries buttress and justify the records of the Bible. Sometimes the Biblical records and the extra Biblical disagree on dating, name-forms, places, but basic information are not totally denied. And so, it is right to say that extra Biblical findings are in agreement with the Bible stories about Abraham.

Parrot concluded with this question and answer: Why is Abraham important? He went on to answer that, Abraham was the first of the Hebrew patriarchs and a figure revered by the three great monotheistic religions—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. According to the Biblical account, Abraham was called by God to leave his country and his people and journey to an undesignated land, where he became the founder of a new nation (ibid).

### 3.2.2.2 Isaac

Isaac is the third of the Patriarchs if we start with Terah, but second when we consider the most important three. According to Bura, the Bible story shows Isaac as being overshadowed by Abraham and Jacob. He seems in the main to have had links with the far south, near Beer-Sheba and in particular the Bible indicates that he engaged in Agriculture, that is, he was apparently settling down more than Abraham near Gerar (Gen. 26:6, 12). Abraham had passed through and stayed at Gerar, but mostly he was located at Hebron. Isaac seems to have been a very successful farmer probably selling his farm products and making a fortune from the sales. And this aroused the envy of the Philistines there at Gerar, so that he had to move to Beer-Sheba (Gen. 26:23) in order to maintain peaceful relations (Bura, 23).

Bright, Hinson, Coats, Sachar in their separate writings alluding to the Biblical narrative stated that, it is possible that little is said about Isaac because his experiences may have been similar to those of Abraham. There is evidence of this in the incidents, sometimes called duplicate narratives, which occur to him and which are so similar to those that happened to Abraham. E.g.: The attempt to deceive Abimelech about his wife in order to secure his safety; and the strife over wells. The only significant thing that we can see in his life is the story of his marriage. We may have it in a reflection of a later feeling against the pre-Israelite

inhabitants of Palestine, or more probably, we have genuine tradition, cast in the form of a personal narrative, of a fresh racial movement. Abraham will not allow his son to marry any of their neighbours, and insist on his taking a wife from among his own kindred. Accordingly Rebecca is brought from Aram Naharaim. This is apparently on the upper waters of the Euphrates, and the city of Nahor which is unnamed in the narrative is probably intended to be Haran. Their narration carries with what the Bible says.

In the attempt to picture Isaac, Bethany Verret on PLUS asked and answered two questions thus:

First, Who Was Isaac? The Book of Genesis details the entire life of Isaac. He was a miracle child, greatly desired by his parents Abraham and Sarah. They were advanced in years, and never had children. Sarah was ninety (90) and Abraham was a hundred (100) when he was born. Isaac was such a miracle, that Sarah laughed at the very idea that she would have a baby when a messenger from God told Abraham about it:

“Now Abraham and Sarah were old, and advanced in years. The way of women had ceased to be with Sarah. So Sarah laughed to herself, saying, ‘After I am worn out, and my lord is old, shall I have pleasure?’ (Genesis 17:11-12).

Her despair reached such depths she encouraged Abraham to have a child with her handmaid Hagar, who conceived and bore a son named Ishmael. After Isaac's birth, tensions began to build between the two women and the half-brothers. At Sarah's encouragement, Abraham sent Hagar and Ishmael away, with God's promise that He would take care of them.

Second, What Did Isaac Do? Perhaps the most memorable and significant moment from Isaac's life was with his father, on a mountain top. Isaac had grown up, loved by his parents and learning to love and follow God. One day Isaac's father came to him and told him they needed to go to the land of Moriah to worship God through sacrifice. While the Bible does not indicate Isaac's exact age, he was old enough to help his father carry the material needed to make a wood pyre, and most theologians believe he was somewhere between later adolescence and early adulthood. He noticed his father had not brought a lamb to sacrifice, and accepted his father's answer, "God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son" (Genesis 22:8).

Isaac allowed his father to subsequently bind him, place him on the altar, and even raise the knife. Nowhere does the Bible indicate that Isaac resisted or fought back. He was a young man who probably could have tried to resist, fight, or overpower

his father, but he did not. The faith that both Abraham and Isaac exhibited in this moment was tremendous.

The writer of Hebrews said, “By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was in the act of offering up his only son, of whom it was said, ‘Through Isaac shall your offspring be named.’ He considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead, from which, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back” (Hebrews 11:17-19). Isaac trusted and obeyed his father, modeling for believers the relationship they should have with their heavenly father. Ultimately, God provided a ram in a nearby thicket to be sacrificed in Isaac’s place, and the nation of Israel would be born from their lineage (Internet: Accessed on 08/01/2024).

Hope Bolinger (2022), Character studies E-Book, Wikipedia following the Bible wrote in agreement to the facts below. That Isaac was promised Abraham and Sarah. God appeared to Abraham and said to him: Genesis 17:15-19: "And God said to Abraham, “As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. I will bless her, and moreover, I will give you a son by her. I will bless her, and she shall become the mother of multitude of nations; kings of peoples shall come from her.” Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed and said to himself, “Shall a child be born to a man who is a hundred years old?

Shall Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child?" And Abraham said to God, "Oh that Ishmael might live before you!" God said, "No, but Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac. I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his offspring after him."

The name Isaac in the Bible means "laughter." This takes on two meanings when you consider the background of when Isaac was born. His mother, Sarah, laughed in mockery that she would be able to have a son at her old age. From this angle calling her son "laughter" could serve as a daily reminder that nothing is too difficult for God. Yet in Genesis 21:6-7 Sarah ascribes the reason for giving this name as the happiness which God had brought her (and everyone else) by giving them a son.

Ancestry and family life: Isaac was the eleventh generation from Noah. He was descended from Shem. His grandfather was Terah, and his father Abraham. He had one older half-brother, Ishmael, and eventually several other younger half-brothers which Abraham had after Sarah's death.

When and where he lived: Isaac lived primarily in the land of Canaan. He lived as a sojourner moving around often, looking for pasture which was needed for feeding his large herds. He lived near the region which was controlled by the Philistines, showing that their influence dated back to well before the time of

David. It was a time in the world when there were almost no followers of the one true God. Polytheism was the common practice of the day and there were many different false gods and idols in the lands where he lived. Isaac lived around 1900+ B.C.

Events surrounding birth: Genesis 21:1-7. Isaac's birth is probably the second most amazing in the Bible, and perhaps in the history of the world (second to Jesus' virgin birth). His mother was 90 and Abraham was 100. His birth was the fulfilment of a promise God had made to Abraham roughly 20 years before, showing that if we wait for God in faith He will always keep His promises to us. Nothing is too difficult for Him.

Training and occupation: Genesis 26:12-14 – Isaac inherited his father's wealth. And it kept growing. He was the head of something like a clan. They planted crops and raised flocks of animals. Many speculate that Abraham was at one point a trader/businessman. Since Isaac inherited everything of his fathers' he would have also inherited the family business (Genesis 25:5).

Place in history: Isaac is a patriarch of the Jewish people. He was one of the first post-flood committed followers of the one true God. Isaac serves as a type of Christ. Hebrews 11:17-19. Abraham received him back as from the dead as a type of Christ's future resurrection. He and Jesus were both the only sons and sons of

promise. They were both descended from Abraham. They both carried the wood for their sacrifice (Genesis 22:6; John 19:17-18). They were both obedient to their father's will, even to the point of being willing to die. They were both delivered up by the power of God.

Stallman, Bob summarised Isaac's life: Isaac was the son of a great father and the father of a great son, but he himself left a mixed record. In contrast to the sustained prominence that Genesis gives to Abraham, the life of Isaac is split apart and told as attachments to the stories of Abraham and Jacob. The characterization of Isaac's life falls into two parts: one decidedly positive and one negative. Lessons regarding work may be derived from each (Internet: Accessed on 09/01/2024).

The much we hear about Isaac like his father Abraham comes from the Bible. The Patriarch Isaac was a Bible character and to try to create him away or outside the Bible is efforts in futility. From Genesis 21 – 25, we meet Isaac born by promise to Abraham and Sarah in their old age. Abraham was a hundred years while Sarah was Ninety years old when Isaac was born. He was circumcised as God had given Abraham circumcision as the covenant sign. He was brought up under the tutelage of his parents. As a youth, his father offered him to God upon God's request, though God saved him from being slaughtered and provided a ram



to save his life. When he was of marriage age, Abraham sent Elieser, his chief servant who married Rebecca the daughter of Bethuel from Abraham's kindred for Isaac. Many things happened to Isaac the way they had happened to his father Abraham: he had problems with jealous neighbours; his wife was taken from him; his wife bore no children after many years of their marriage, not until God answered Isaac's prayer in respect of his wife for children. Isaac was blessed and so successful in life like his father Abraham. He was the father of Esau and Jacob, Jacob who became the third or fourth Patriarch.

### 3.2.2.3 Jacob

Jacob is the second son of Isaac and twin brother of Esau. It is written on Wikipedia that, Jacob (/ˈdʒeɪkəb/; Hebrew: יַעֲקֹב, Modern: Yaʿaqōv<sup>①</sup>, Tiberian: Yaʿāqōḇ; Arabic: يَعْقُوب, Romanized: Yaʿqūb; Greek: Ἰακώβ, Romanized: Iakōb), later given the name Israel, is regarded as a patriarch of the Israelites and is an important figure in Abrahamic religions, such as Judaism, Samaritanism, Christianity, and Islam. Jacob first appears in the Book of Genesis, originating from the Hebrew tradition in the Torah. Described as the son of Isaac and Rebecca, and the grandson of Abraham, Sarah, and Bethuel, Jacob is presented as the second-born among Isaac's children. His fraternal twin brother is the elder, named Esau, according to the Biblical account. Jacob is said to have bought Esau's

birthright and, with his mother's help, deceived his aging father to bless him instead of Esau. Later in the narrative, following a severe drought in his homeland of Canaan, Jacob and his descendants, with the help of his son Joseph (who had become a confidant of the pharaoh), moved to Egypt where Jacob died at the age of 147. He is supposed to have been buried in the Cave of Machpelah (Internet: Accessed on 05/01/2024).

‘Christian Answer Net’ summed up the life story of Jacob in the following words: that Jacob is from the Hebrew: יַעֲקֹב —transliteration: Yaaqob —meaning: one who follows on another’s heels; a sup planter (Genesis 25:26; 27:36; Hosea 12:2-4). Jacob, the son of Isaac and grandson of Abraham, was born probably at Lahai-roi, when his father was 59 and his grandfather Abraham was 159 years old. Like his father, he was of a quiet and gentle disposition, and when he grew up followed the life of a shepherd, while his brother Esau became an enterprising hunter. His dealing with Esau, however, showed much mean selfishness and cunning (Genesis 25:29-34). When Isaac was about 160 years of age, Jacob and his mother conspired and deceived the aged Patriarch (Genesis 27), in order to transfer the birthright blessings from Esau to Jacob. The advantages of birthright were...

1. Superior rank in his family (Genesis 49:3)
2. A double portion of the paternal inheritance (Deuteronomy 21:17)

3. The priestly office in the family (Numbers 8:17-19)
4. The promise of the Seed in which all nations of the Earth were to be blessed (Genesis 22:18).

Soon after his acquisition of his father's blessings (Genesis 27), Jacob became conscious of his guilt; and afraid of the anger of Esau. At the suggestion of Rebecca, Isaac sent him away to Haran, 400 miles or more, to find a wife among his cousins, the family of Laban, the Syrian, his father Isaac's brother-in-law (Genesis 28). There he met his future wives Leah and Rachel (Genesis 29).

Laban would not consent to give him his daughter in marriage till he had served 7 years; but to Jacob these years "seemed but a few days, for the love he had to her." But when the 7 years were expired, Laban craftily deceived Jacob, and gave him his daughter Leah. Another 7 years of service had to be completed probably before he obtained the beloved Rachel. But "life-long sorrow, disgrace, and trials, in the retributive providence of God, followed as a consequence of this double union." At the close of the 14 years of service, Jacob desired to return to his parents, but at the entreaty of Laban he tarried yet 6 more years with him, tending his flocks (31:41).

He then set out with his family and property "to go to Isaac his father in the land of Canaan" (Genesis 31). Laban was angry when he heard that Jacob had set

out on his journey, and pursued after him, overtaking him in 7 days. The meeting was of a painful kind. After much recrimination and reproach directed against Jacob, Laban is at length pacified, and taking an affectionate farewell of his daughters, returns to his home in Padan-aram. And now all connection of the Israelites with Mesopotamia is at an end.

Soon after parting with Laban, he is met by a company of angels, as if to greet him on his return and welcome him back to the Land of Promise (32:1-2). He called the name of the place Mahanaim, i.e., “the double camp,” probably his own camp and that of the angels. The vision of angels was the counterpart of what he had formerly seen at Bethel, when, 20 years before, the weary, solitary traveller, on his way to Padan-aram, saw the angels of God ascending and descending on the ladder whose top reached to heaven (Gen. 28:12).

He now hears with dismay of the approach of his brother Esau with a band of 400 men to meet him. In great agony of mind he prepares for the worst. He feels that he must now depend only on God, and he betakes himself to Him in earnest prayer, and sends on before him a munificent present to Esau, “a present to my lord Esau from thy servant Jacob.”

Jacob’s family was then transported across the Jabbok River, but he himself remained behind, spending the night in communion with God. While thus engaged,

there appeared one in the form of a man who wrestled with him. In this mysterious contest Jacob prevailed, and as a memorial of it his name was changed to Israel (wrestler with God); and the place where this occurred he called Penuel (Peniel), for he said, “...I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved...” -- Genesis 32:25-31 KJV)

After this anxious night, Jacob went on his way, halting, mysteriously weakened by the conflict, but strong in the assurance of the Divine favour. Esau came forth and met him; but his spirit of revenge was appeased, and the brothers met as friends, and during the remainder of their lives they maintained friendly relations.

After a brief sojourn at Succoth, Jacob moved forward and pitched his tent near Shechem, (Gen.33:18), but at length, under divine directions, he moved to Bethel, where he made an altar unto God (35:6-7), and where God appeared to him and renewed the Abrahamic covenant.

While journeying from Bethel to Ephrath (the Canaanitish name of Bethlehem), Rachel died in giving birth to her 2nd son Benjamin (35:16-20), 15 or 16 years after the birth of Joseph her first son. He then reached the old family residence at Mamre, to be with his dying father Isaac. The complete reconciliation between Esau and Jacob was shown by their uniting in the burial of the patriarch Isaac, their father (35:27-29) (Internet: Accessed 05/1/2024).

Albright, Bright, Bura, Martens (1981), Wiersbe (2001), Vaux, Gunneweg, and Noss generally agree regarding the places Jacob lived that, the reconstruction from the Biblical narratives is a reasonable and quite possible one; but again we must remember that the traditions may not be presented more to us in an intentionally chronological order, and certainly there is much more to the life of Jacob than these isolated events. However, as far as the history of Israel is concerned, there can be little certainty relating to the order of events, but it is relatively unimportant. While Jacob is mainly associated, then, in the traditions passed down to us, with Shechem and Bethel, in later life we even find his sons venturing as far north as Dothan with their flocks (Gen. 37: 17), and this is at a time when Jacob is in the south at Hebron; here, then, may be an example of an earlier event which occurred while Jacob was living further north, which was misplaced and put at a later time. However, this can never be demonstrated. The main activity of Jacob like Abraham (but less like Isaac) seems to have been that of a semi-nomad, a cattle herd, wandering in the hills of Palestine, concerned to find water and pasture for their charges, and their way of life is possibly illustrated by much of the background of Sinuhe.

According to Oesterley and Robinson, the stories of Jacob and his sons, especially, seem to reflect their tribal inter-relationships. The bringing of Leah and Rachel from Haran or Padan-Aram may represent a tribal movement in the same

way that Isaac and Rebecca's marriage does this. It may be doubtful even, they claim, whether the twelve Patriarchs were actually the sons of Jacob at all, for it would seem that the later Israel was formed by the federation of several groups of clans. The stories, however, do seem to indicate a sense of common blood among them all, though they fall into groups within the which the alliances is closer. The two main groups are:-

- a. The Leah group- consisting traditionally of Reuben, Simeon, Levi and Judah, together with later, Issachar and Zebulun; as subordinate tribes Gad and Asher were attached (the sons of Zilpah, Leah's maid). Leah later gave birth to Jacob's only daughter, Dinah. Of these, the leadership eventually came to rest with Judah.
- b. The Rachel group- made up of Joseph (later divided into Ephraim and Manasseh) and Benjamin, with Dan and Naphtali appended (sons from Bilhah, Rachel's maid). Here the tribe of Benjamin at length attained to a position of authority (134). Martens, Pixley, Gottward, agree with them.

With regard to Jacob, Bright (1952) again mentions many of the clarifications of events in his life which archaeological discoveries have made, but one further thing may be mentioned which has already been touched on in considering Abraham, and the way in which Sarah gave to him her maid-servant when she turned out to be barren (Gen.16:1-4, 15). Similarly in Gen. 30:1-3, 9, Jacob's wives

are greatly concerned about having children. When Rachel found she was barren, she supplied Bilhah, and Leah under similar circumstances gave Zilpah to Jacob, just as Sarah had given Hagar to her husband, Abraham. This appears to have been a common custom of the time. Marriage was not considered to be much for the purpose of companionship as for the perpetuation of the family by bearing children. And it was of vital importance to the patriarchs that the family multiplies by one means or another. Partly for the sake of the family, and partly perhaps because of the promise made to them by God (Bright, 65).

Jacob is a Bible character and a construction of the story of his life has to be based on the Biblical records. It is important to note here that the extra Biblical findings generally agree with the Biblical records with minor differences which are considered inconsequential to discredit the records and render them undependable. And so it is right to say that they have further authenticated the story of Jacob.

‘Christian Net’ went on that, Jacob was soon after uniting with his elder twin brother and death of their father Isaac, deeply grieved by the loss of his beloved son Joseph through the jealousy of his brothers (Gen.37:33). Then follows the story of the famine, and the successive goings down into Egypt to buy corn (42), which led to the discovery of the long-lost Joseph, and the patriarch's going down



with all his household, numbering about 70 souls (Exodus 1:5; Deuteronomy 10:22; Acts 7:14), to sojourn in the land of Goshen.

Here Jacob, “after being strangely tossed about on a very rough ocean, found at last a tranquil harbor, where all the best affections of his nature were gently exercised and largely unfolded” (Genesis 48).

At length, the end of his checkered course drew nigh, and Jacob summoned his sons to his bedside that he may bless them. Among his last words, he repeats the story of his beloved Rachel’s death, although 40 years had passed away since that event took place, as tenderly as if it had happened only yesterday; and when “he had made an end of charging his sons, he gathered up his feet into the bed, and yielded up the ghost” (Gen. 49:33).

His body was embalmed and carried with great pomp into the land of Canaan, and buried beside his wife Leah in the cave of Machpelah, according to his dying charge. There, probably, his embalmed body remains to this day (50:1-13) (Internet: Accessed 05/1/2024).

Bura, Hinson, Cochrane, Brown, Bright, basically agree in their separate writings that, of the two sons of Isaac –Esau and Jacob – the younger, Jacob, emerges as the inheritor of the covenant made to Abraham. This comes about by his bargaining with Esau for the birth right, and his trickery in gaining the deathbed

blessing of his father, Isaac. Both these incidents are paralleled in the Nuzi tablets. From them we find an example of a brother selling his birth right, a grove he had inherited, for three sheep, which seems to be just as uneven a bargain as that between Jacob and Esau (Gen. 25:30 – 34). Again there is precedent for the seriousness with which Isaac will not revoke the blessings he had given, even though it had been falsely extorted by Jacob. The Nuzians respected oral blessings as irrevocable matters; there is an example of such a blessing upheld even in court. According to the customs of the day, Isaac must keep his word (Gen.27:33 cf. 49:8). The extra biblical records match with the Bible story of Isaac.

Got Questions commented on the meaning of Jacob's name thus: Jacob's life began with a struggle. As a twin in the womb with Esau, he jostled for position and was born grasping his brother's heel. Jacob's name is translated as "he deceives" (Genesis 25:26). When his mother, Rebecca, asked God during her pregnancy what was happening to her, God told her that there were two nations within her womb who would become divided. One would be stronger than the other, and the older would serve the younger (Genesis 25:23). Jacob's name, "deceiver," does seem to characterize much of Jacob's life. But he was also Israel, one to whom God made promises to which He remained faithful. God appeared to Jacob, and Jacob believed God's promises. Despite Jacob's faults, God chose him to be the leader of a great nation that still bears his name today. But for this, it is

unlikely that we would know much about Jacob, who appears to be in the middle of events while the key players are those around him. There is no great wisdom or bravery in Jacob to speak of, and we are tempted to see him as little more than God's passive instrument. If we are tempted to think that, because we aren't in the spotlight performing great acts for God, we are unimportant to Him, then we should consider the life of Jacob and know that, in spite of our failings, God can and will still use us in His plan (Internet accessed on 05/01/2024). Jacob's name means deceiver, he deceived his aged father in collaboration with his mother Rebecca to take the blessings meant for his elder twin brother, Esau. It is important to note that, the Bible warns against deception. Those who deceive others will also be deceived (2Tim. 3:13). Jacob is our good example to learn from. He deceived his father and took Esau's blessings. Laban deceived him many times to take his blessings. Hear Jacob crying to Laban: "I worked for you through the scorching heat of the day and through cold and sleepless nights..... and you changed my wages ten times" (Gen. 31:40 – 41). He received it in his own coins, tearfully.

### **3.3 Birth of a Nation**

From the foregoing, it is established that Israel as a nation is from the descendants of Abraham. Abraham was son of Terah from the family line of Shem, the first son of Noah (Gen. 11:10 – 26). Abraham had Ishmael from Sarah's maid-servant, Hagar. He had Isaac by Sarah who was Abraham's second son but was the

son of the covenant because God had promised to establish his covenant with Abraham only through the son born to him by Sarah, and not the son from another woman even though because of the delay in Sarah giving birth, Hagar's son became the first son. Isaac got married to Rebecca and had Esau and Jacob. Jacob had twelve sons through four women, his wives (and cousins), Leah and Rachel, and his concubines, Bilhah and Zilpah, who in order of their birth, were, Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Issachar, Zebulun, Joseph, and Benjamin. Jacob also had a daughter named Dinah. All his sons got married and had children and so became the heads of their own family groups, later known as the Twelve Tribes of Israel.

Kimball wrote that, "the OT states that in its earliest period, Israel was a confederation of twelve tribes (Judges 5) genealogically descended from the patriarch Jacob-Israel and through him from –Isaac and – Abraham. That the genealogical line Abraham – Jacob – Israel is much a fiction as the nation of the 12 –tribes emerging from Jacob's 12 sons does not necessarily mean that this richly developed OT tradition has no basis in historical fact (768).

Sharpe Samuel summarily wrote that, The Hebrew nation had a history of about twelve hundred years, from the time of the Judges to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans. The earlier traditions about the Patriarchs and even the

residence in Egypt, we can hardly include under the name of history. We first find the nation divided into several little tribes of herdsmen, some dwelling among the conquered natives on the east of the Jordan, and some struggling against the unfriendly Canaanites on the west of that river. The river did not make any marked division among the Hebrew tribes. The strong division was between the northern and; the southern tribes. When the needs of war led them to choose a king, they chose Saul of the tribe of Benjamin, a middle tribe whose feelings were with the north. On his overthrow by the Philistines, David of the southern tribe of Judah made himself king. His warlike skill subdued most of the Canaanites, and thus he united all the Hebrew tribes and the subject races into one monarchy. He made Jerusalem his capital.

His son Solomon was a man of peace; and during his reign the country was prosperous. He built the Temple of Jerusalem for the worship of Jehovah, established the Levites to conduct the worship there, and surrounded his throne with magnificence. But his heavy taxes raised discontent among his subjects; and upon his death the northern tribes revolted from his son Rehoboam. Henceforth the nation was divided into two kingdoms; and our history is very much limited to that of Judah (Internet: Accessed on 06/01/2024).

Below is the map of ancient Israel showing the two kingdoms – Israel and Judah.



Map of Ancient Israel showing the kingdom of Israel and the kingdom of Judah

### **3.4 The Religious life of the Patriarchs and of Israel as a Nation.**

Here, it is to understand the beliefs and worship life of the people of Israel. Do the patriarchs ever have a god or gods? What was their belief system and what do they hold unto? It is in religion that gods and worship are talked of. And we need to know what religion is before going to talk of the religious life of the patriarchs or of Israel as a people.

#### **3.4.1 What is Religion?**

Ademilehin Ajayi opined that, it is the experience of everyone who is seriously engaged in the study of religion that an adequate definition of religion is almost next to impossible. An adequate definition of religion should apply to nothing else but to religion and should differentiate it from all other things like history, sociology and philosophy. All those essential conditions that underlie any form of religion must be included in any true definition of religion (9).

Many scholars have attempted a definition of religion. J. Esthein Carpenter defined religion as the ‘whole group of rites performed in honour of the divine being’ (quoted in Ajayi, 9). Max Muller says that ‘religion is the perception of the infinite’ (quoted in Ajayi, 9). Emmanuel Kant defines religion as the ‘recognition of our duties as divine commands’ (quoted in Ajayi, 10). William James says that, ‘religion means the feelings, acts and experiences of the individual man in their

solitude so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider the divine' (quoted in Ajayi, 10). Herbert Spencer says 'religion is a feeling of wonder in the presence of the unknown' (quoted in Ajayi, 10).

J.P. Ekarika defined religion etymologically in three ways, all based on Latin terms. That religion is derived from:

1. RELIGERE- a word which means to observe conscientiously, or to study closely. In this connection, religion then signifies an attentive study of concern for matters pertaining to God. It is that branch of studies about God demanding man's careful attention.
2. RE-ELIGERE- to choose once more, or select as one's own. Here Ekarika says, religion signifies that one chooses once more God whom one has lost through sin.
3. RE-LIGARE- to unite oneself again; to bind oneself to something hence to bind ourselves fast to God in worship and adoration.

In summary Ekarika defined religion as 'the virtue whereby we offer god the worship that is rightly His on account of His supreme excellence' (102)

Lois Berkhof says, 'religion is a conscious and voluntary relationship to God which expresses itself in grateful act of worship and loving service' (113).



We can say that, religion is the ordering of one's life, conduct and character in the light of one's belief in God. It is the practical outworking of man's response to divine revelation (Foster, 87).

From what we have seen from the definitions considered above, we can agree with Ajayi when he notes that:

It is in religion that God and man meet and have a kind of communion. Religion deals with relationships.

Each religion must have a creed to show how the world came into existence.

Man's place in the world and what will happen to man after death.

There has to be a code of conduct to guide the believers.

There has to be a cult which has to do with worship and prayer (Ajayi, 10).

We will not go any further again but it is imperative to note that, people worship or venerate differently. Right from time immemorial, people have believed in a supreme being; in one God; and in gods. There are also various objects of worship. Thus the patriarchs, being man lived under religious environment and have their own beliefs and worship system.

The story of the people's Religion and worship will be ex-rayed in two phases: - The Religious life of the patriarchs; and that of the Israelites or Hebrews as a nation.

### **3.4.2 God to the Fore Fathers (Patriarchs).**

In knowing what the forebears of Israel believed in and worshipped, we have to note that they lived in a place and among people and at a time. The patriarchs lived in Chaldea and Palestine. The Religious practices at the time need to be noted. The Bible, however, indicates a close relationship between the religion of the Patriarchs and the later religion of the Israelites and Bright endorses this. Though Israel's distinctive religion began with Moses, it is prepared for by that of the patriarchs. One problem which arises is that raised by Joshua 24:2, which have sometimes been referred to as the religion of the patriarchs. In the verse, however, there is a specific mention of the service of other gods before Abraham had been called out, and a survey of the religious background in Mesopotamia may well give us an idea of the patriarchs' early religion (Bright, 72).

Brandshow, drawing from Wright (1957), Oesterley and Robinson, Elliott (2002), Kaufmann, observed that, More recent attempts to understand the patriarchal religion have emphasised, and probably over-emphasised, the fact that the home of the pre-Mosaic religion is in Palestine. Because of this, it has been

maintained that, despite the lack of certainty that we may have of details, we should view their religion against the background of Canaanite religion. Albright, Vaux, Sachar, agree with Muhlenberg who mentions that, Genesis gives no suggestion that there was any sharp difference between the Patriarchs and the usual worship of the Canaanites. True though this may be, on closer scrutiny, it is surprising how few these similarities can actually be demonstrated to be. The main similarity seems really to be limited to names and certain suggested links with already existing Canaanite shrines such as at Shechem, Jerusalem and Bethel. As we have noted, 'El' was at the head of the Canaanite pantheon, and immediately we are stuck by the way in which El figures in the names of God used in Genesis: - El 'Elyon (God most high) in Gen. 14:18-22; El 'Olam (everlasting God), in Gen.21:33; El 'Roi (God for/of seeing), in Gen.16:13; also El 'Berith (God of Covenant), although this name is not mentioned until Judges 9:46, may be referred to in Gen.12:6. While recognising that the patriarchs worshipped God under the name El, it is to be noted that, El was a general word for the god. Probably the most common name for God in the early part of the Bible is El-Shaddai (God the Mountaineer, implying majesty and might, hence God Almighty is not bad as used in Gen. 17:11; 28:3; 35:1; 48:3; 49:25 and Exod. 6:3.

Albrecht Alt, stated (with Gottward (1979), Pixley, Hinson, Elwell, and Kittel, in their separate writings generally agreeing) that, the main interest in

Canaanite religion centered round nature. As a settled, agricultural people, they were very conscious of nature, and very dependent on it. In particular they worshipped the power of fertility, and this worship was expressed in the high places where there were stones or pillars set up to mark the high places together with 'asherah' which may have been some sort of image of the god. Albright rightly remarks that, we have no grounds for saying that an El monotheism existed among the early Amorites, of whom the Patriarchs were a section. And he suggests that the early Hebrews' religion was probably similar to the tridiac system known to have existed in Canaan, with the father as El, the mother of unknown name, but possibly Elat or Anath, and the son as Shaddai (Albright, 137).

But the Biblical traditions reveal that the religion of the patriarchs was more than, and different from, Canaanite religion. Firstly, the Hebrew ancestors were shepherds, and not agriculturists; and as such they were interested in history than in nature, for they were concerned for their welfare in the movements of men and people so that they might know where to gain room for their cattle. The communications of the deity to the respective Patriarchs are given in terms of historical events (e.g. Gen.15:2-16), and the deity reveals himself in a personal way so that his name becomes related to the Patriarch.

It is in this that the religion of the Patriarch is to be seen to be so different from that of the Canaanites, and here Bright is so insistent, “Their religion, as seen from evidence in Genesis and from extra-Biblical texts both contemporary and later, was of a distinctive or quite different from the official paganisms of the surrounding lands (79). The Patriarchal God was seen as a sort of family or clan god in intimate relationship with the individual Patriarch. Ahlstrom (1993), Vaux and Albrecht have done a great deal of work in this area, and following them Bright says, “Their God was the God of the clan, the personal God of the clan chief. This may be seen from the archaic names for the deity in Genesis, e.g. the God (perhaps ‘Shield’, asin 15:1) of Abraham; The Fear (properly Kinsman of Isaac (31:42); The Mighty one (champion) of Jacob (49:24). It is also illustrated in early personal names such as Abiram, Ahiram, Abiezer, Ahiezer, Abimelech, Ahimelech, and the like, in which the God is spoken of as the (divine) father or brother of the worshipper. The Patriarchal God was the unseen head of the clan, whom the clan father had undertaken to serve and to trust, and whose promises of the blessings of land and seed (e.g. Gen.15) he had received. To this God, whose cult was simple and presided over by the clan father himself, the clan gave supreme, if not exclusive devotion (Bright, 82).

According to Edersheim, the one grand characteristic of the patriarchs was their faith. The lives of the patriarchs prefigure the whole history of Israel and their

Divine selection. In the words of a recent German writer, amidst all varying events, the one constant trait in patriarchal history was "faith which lays hold on the word of promise, and on the strength of this word gives up that which is seen and present for that which is unseen and future." Thus "Abraham was the man of joyous, working faith; Isaac of patient, bearing faith; Jacob of contending and prevailing faith." But all lived and "died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims in the earth." And it is still so. Without ignoring the great privilege of those who are descended from Abraham, yet, in the true sense, only "they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham;" "and if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

He went further to give a background analysis of the religious life of the people with which Abraham and the other patriarchs lived. Descending the genealogy of Shem, Abram stands tenth among "the fathers" after the flood. He was a son - apparently the third and youngest - of Terah, the others being Haran and Nahor. The family, or perhaps more correctly the tribe or clan of Terah, resided in Chaldea, which is the southern part of Babylonia. "Ur of the Chaldees," as recently again discovered, was one of the oldest, if not the most ancient, among the cities of Chaldea. It lies about six miles away from the river Euphrates, and,

curious to relate, is at present somewhere near one hundred and twenty-five miles from the Persian Gulf, though it is supposed, that at one time it was actually washed by its waters, the difference being accounted for by the rapid deposit of what becomes soil, or of alluvium, as it is called. Thus Abram must in his youth have stood by the seashore, and seen the sand innumerable, to which his posterity in after ages was likened. Another figure, under which his posterity is described, must have been equally familiar to his mind. It is well known that the brilliancy of a starlit sky in the East, and especially where Abram dwelt, far exceeds anything which we witness in our latitudes. Possibly this may have first led in those regions to the worship of the heavenly bodies. And Abram must have been the more attracted to their contemplation, as the city in which he dwelt was "wholly given" to that idolatry; for the real site of Ur has been ascertained from the circumstance that the bricks still found there bear the very name of Hur on them. Now this word points to Hurki, the ancient moon-god, and Ur of the Chaldees was the great "Moon-city," the very center of the Chaldean moon-worship. The most remarkable ruins of that city are those of the old moon-temple of Ur, which from the name on the bricks are computed to date from the year 2000 before Christ. Thus bricks that are thirty-eight centuries old have now been brought forward to bear witness to the old city of Abraham, and to the tremendous change that must have passed over him when, in faith upon the Divine word, he obeyed its command.

Jewish tradition has one or two varying accounts to show how Abram was converted from the surrounding idolatry, and what persecutions he had to suffer in consequence. Scripture does not indulge our fancy with such matters; but, true to its uniform purpose, only relates what belongs to the history of the kingdom of God. We learn, however, from Joshua 24:2, 14, 15, that the family of Terah had "in old time, on the other side of the flood," or of Euphrates, "served other gods;" and we can readily understand what influence their surroundings must, in the circumstances, have exercised upon them. It was out of this city of Ur that God called Abram. Previously to this, Haran, Abram's eldest brother, had died. We read, that "Terah took Abram, his son, and Lot the son of Haran his son's son, and Sarai his daughter-in-law, his son Abram's wife, and they went forth with them from Ur of the Chaldees, to go into the land of Canaan; and they came unto Haran, and dwelt there." The words which we have above leave no room for doubt, that the first call of God had come to Abram long before the death of Terah, and when the clan was still at Ur. (Comp. Acts 7:2) From the circumstance that Haran is afterwards called "the city of Nahor," (Genesis 24:10; comp. 27:43) we gather that Nahor, Abraham's brother, and his family had also settled there, though perhaps at a later period, and without relinquishing their idolatry. It is a remarkable confirmation of the scriptural account, that, though this district belongs to Mesopotamia, and not to Chaldea, its inhabitants are known to have for a long time



retained the peculiar Chaldean language and worship. Haran has preserved its original name, and at the time of the Romans was one of the great battle-fields on which that power sustained a defeat from the Parthians (ibid).

It is vital to state here clearly that, Terah, Abraham's father came from an environment that served gods. His family could not be an exception. In Gen.12:7, Abram built an altar to the God that appeared to him. This even shows he was aware of gods, and he has chosen now to serve the one that has revealed himself to him. And in Joshua 24:2, God is saying to the people through Joshua what their fore parents believed and served, but they have to stick to the God Yahweh, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and not go back to gods/idols. So Abraham came from a background of idols, but God Almighty (El-Shaddai), Yehvah revealed Himself to him and so became his God forever, throughout his generations.

### **3.4.3 God to the Nation of Israel**

On religion of Israel as God's elect, Illustrated Bible Dictionary said, Israelite's faith was founded on the belief that Israel was God's chosen people. His choice of her had been made by means of two connected and complimenting acts.

(a) He chose Abraham and his seed, by taking Abraham out of Ur and bringing him to the promised land of Canaan, making there an everlasting

covenant with him and his descendants and promising him that his seed would be a blessing to all the earth (Gen 11:31-12:7,15,17; 22:15-18; Neh.9:7; Isa 41:8).

(b) He chose Abraham's seed by redeeming them from slavery in Egypt and bringing them out of bondage under Moses, renewing the Abrahamic covenant with them in an amplified form at Sinai and settling them in the promised land as their national home (Ex 3:6-10, Deut. 6:21-23, Ps 105).

Each of these acts of choice is also described as God's call, i.e. a sovereign utterance of words and disposal of events by which God summoned in the one case, Abraham, and in the other, Abraham's seed, to acknowledge Him as their God and live to Him as His people ( Is 51:2; Hos. 11:1). Israelite's faith looked back to these two acts as having created the nation (cf. Is. 43:1; Acts 13:17) (435).

Encyclopedia Britannica, Boyd, Noss, Strong, Meyer, all agree with the Bible that, the Israelite's God was God of the fathers. In both the Old and the New Testaments, God is called the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, because with them God's relationship of promise and purpose was fixed for all those who descended from them. The story of Abraham's acquiescence to God's command to sacrifice Isaac was used in the early Christian church as an example of faith (Hebrews 11:17) and of obedience (James 2:21). In later Jewish tradition the sacrifice of Isaac was cited in appeals for the mercy of God.

We may therefore be right to say in conclusion that, Israel had a God who is all knowing; God who is the Mighty one of Israel. Their names of God show their understanding of who they were serving. El-Shaddai (mighty-one), The Holy one of Israel (Pas.89:18). To Israel, God was God of the fathers. Their God was everything to them. Their names reflected their God. Some of their personal names such as Abiram, Ahiram, Abiezer, Ahiezer, Abimelech, Ahimelech, Daniel, Joel, Samuel, and the like, are examples in which the God is spoken of as the (divine) father or brother of the worshipper.

The religion of the people of Israel as a nation is fully founded under Moses. When Moses led Israel out of Egypt, he took them upon God's instructions to Mount Sinai where God entered into an eternal covenant with Israel, and gave them the Ten Words which have become the basis for Christian living even today (Exod. 19 – 20). From here, God gave further laws which direct the whole life of the people as a covenant community. The laws were to guide the people in worship, family and community life, business, farming, eating habits, relationship with neighbours who are non-Israelites, and all other aspects in life. The laws taught them how to remain in God's favour and what will take the favour away (Exodus through Numbers). It was under Moses that Israel really understood the God of the Fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Noss wrote that, Moses was a creative personality of the first order. He revolutionized the religious orientation of

his people by persuading them to adopt the basic idea of Israelite religion, namely, that for them, there is but one God, supreme over their history and their lives. This God had chosen Israel to be His people and desire to make and abide by a covenant with them, a mutually binding pact. Thereafter, God would be active in their history, to bless or to punish them according to their faithfulness to Him. Elements of the desert heritage –demonology, magic, and divination- remained in the new orientation, but they survived now as recognitions of realities present in the physical world under God. The contrast with Semitic polytheisms was sharp: the gods and myths of the polytheistic faiths were henceforth to be given no hearing; they were to be ignored. Israel had but one God (Noss, 355). Basically, Kittel, Brown, Baron, Ginsberg, Gregory of Nyssa (1975), Pixley, Albright, Elliott, in their individual writings agree with Noss. The God that revealed Himself to the great fore father, Abraham now continued to be Abraham's descendants' God as promised to the fathers. Moses gave Israel the new ease of life different from what they were witnessing during their four hundred and thirty years stay in Egypt. To round up, Iyortyom stated that, "The God of Israel was Patriarchal God; that is, the God of Abraham, God of Isaac, and God of Jacob, which signifies the Trinity (three-in-one)" (12). And so it is according to both the Biblical and extra Biblical evidences.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **UNDERSTANDING ELECTION**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

As the Lord's Church enters the twenty first Century we will do ourselves much good to constantly examine ourselves, looking to the Scriptures to make sure that we are what the Lord wants us to be, willing to confront any challenge that threatens the Church for which Jesus died. And one of the challenges of the Church is that the Church knows the truth about the way of Salvation. Election is something that concerns man's salvation, and it is understood to some extent erroneously. The knowledge has to be exposed so that the church can come to the right knowledge of the whole concept of election. It is to this that this chapter is devoted.

##### **4.2.1 Meaning of Election**

Election is a term that is used both in the secular sense and in the Religious sense. We need to treat the term in both senses. That is, we need to understand the term in its general purpose sense before considering it in the context it is used and applied in this work – the Religious sense.

In the general sense, Election is choice making. It is the act of electing, or being elected; choose or being chosen. To elect means to select or make a decision.

Election is a common term among nations, states, and organizations. The Advanced Dictionary defines election in four easy ways:

1. A vote to select the winner of a position or political office.
2. The act of selecting someone or something; the exercise of deliberate choice.
3. The status or fact of being elected.
4. The predestination of some individuals as objects of divine mercy (especially as conceived by Calvinist)

From the above four ways, election is a matter of choice in varying forms. The choice making can be influenced as in political elections by the manifestos of those seeking elective positions, but the decision of who or what to choose or elect rests with the person electing or choosing. The fourth definition has to do with divine choice which is not open to pressure or influence but depends on divine will and Counsel. And this last one is the one that applies to the subject in this work.

The King James Bible Dictionary defines election as the act of choosing a person to fill an office or employment, by any manifestation of preference, as by ballot, uplifted hands or viva voce as the election of a king, of a president, or a mayor; choice voluntary preference free will liberty to act or not. It is at his election to accept or refuse; power of choosing or selecting; discernment

discrimination distinction; In theology, divine choice is predetermination of God, by which persons are distinguished as objects of mercy, become subjects of grace, are sanctified and prepared for heaven.

These definitions are concerned with election generally. For the purpose of this work, the one that concerns divine choice is the one that applies here appropriately.

According to Derek Wood's (ed.) (1980) the Illustrated Bible Dictionary, election is the act of choice whereby, God picks an individual or group out of a larger company for a purpose or destiny of His own appointment. The main Old Testament, word for this is the verb *bahar*, which expresses the idea of deliberately selecting someone or something after carefully considering the alternatives (e.g. sling and stones 1Sam 17:40; a place of refuge Deut.23:16; a wife Gen 6:2; good rather than evil Isa. 7:15f; life rather than death Deut.30:19f; the service of God rather than idols Jos. 24:22). The word implies a decided preference for, sometimes positive pleasure in the object chosen (ref Isa 1:29) (435). God's choice is not based on human imagination. He chooses as he wills. His criteria for choosing are based on His divine guidelines. He's careful in choosing for the fulfilment of His will. It is not in His nature to make mistakes. This definition aptly considers God's nature of no mistakes. He chooses after careful thought. He's not hasty in His ways. Because He is God, the Creator and not the creature, His ways are perfect. He has everything and everybody at His disposal. He has all the alternatives before

Him. That is why anything or anyone He chooses; He uses that in accomplishing His divine will. He said in the choice of Israel, “Now therefore, if you obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my own possession among all peoples; for all the earth is mine” (Exo.19:5). It is based on this fact that Moses reiterated to Israel when he reminded them of their distinctiveness and the need to live as such saying, “For you are a people holy to the Lord your God, and the Lord has chosen you to be a people for His own possession, out of all the people that are on the face of the earth (Deut.14:2).”

Pink defined election thus “It is that part of counsel of God whereby, He did from all eternity purpose in Himself to display His grace upon certain of His creatures” (15). Pink like others attributes the election to God’s sovereign will to do what He deems fit with His creation. Nobody sits in God’s counsel or advises God. And choosing to use what creature for whatever He wills is part of His holy, divine nature. He chose the plagues to inflict on Egypt to bring Pharaoh and the Egyptians to their knees in order to take Israel out of slavery. He chose blood, frogs, dust, swarms of flies, hail, death of cattle, locust, ashes, darkness and death of firstborns to carry out His divine punishment of Egypt (Exo.7:14-12:29). He did this out of His divine counsel, out of His own will with no interference, or seeking advice from neither Moses nor Aaron.



According to Wright (2004),

Election is a pure religious idea. It originates from the necessity of spiritual life as the natural explanation of the source of its saving impulses. The movement in the goal against sin is directly traced to a cause supernatural to the sinner. Righteousness is never an ordinary thing, or a common privilege that may be ranked beside others, it is laid to the responsibility of God whose peculiar work it is. And, as it is of His inception, its continuance and successful fruition likewise are by His agency. It began with Him, and He will perfect it, by that faithfulness which, if it be too strong to describe it as irresistible grace-thus compulsion of sovereign might-is indeed the pertinacity of unwearied love, of strong, wise, unerring fatherhood over erring, weak and foolish childhood. The free return of man to God springs from the passionate communication of God to man. Election is the antecedent of revelation (220).

Wright is saying the issue of choice lies with God. His choice is normally based on righteousness. He is holy and upright in all His dealings. He does everything without sentiments. Unlike man who is always sentimental in his dealings. God does his work of choosing in righteousness and love that can never be quantified or qualified by man. Out of love that can never be comprehended by man that He at different times choose individuals and or groups for His divine purpose for the good and wellbeing of sinful man. And the divine purposes of God for man's good are such that man cannot repel them. All this is done out of His divine will. I agree with Wright it is God's divine will that brought man into existence. God elected to create man in His own image when He declared wittingly, "v26-And God said, let Us make man in Our image, after our likeness, and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the

earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.v27- so God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him, male and female created He them (Gen.1:26, 27 KJV). Though creation is part of revelation, God chose to create man and the rest of creation was to be for man and his wellbeing. Thus to say revelation is an offshoot of election is right. The rest of revelation is because man is there. God reveals Himself in the things he created and continues to make known Himself to man as revelation continues. And God at different times in history elects individuals and groups through whom He will carry out his divine will and bring glory to His name and bless man.

Neusner Jacob (ed.) (1999) defines election as the act or result of selecting an individual or group to carry out a particular task. In the Bible, in other Jewish texts, the election intended is almost always God's choice of Abraham and his descendants to be His special people among all the nations. Genesis tells the story of how God selected Abraham and promised him the land of Canaan and numerous descendants. Those promises were renewed to Abraham's son Isaac and later to Abraham's grandson Jacob. The twelve tribes that made the nation of Israel who were the off springs of Jacob from his twelve sons became the people who fulfilled the promises made to Abraham when their population exploded in Egypt. They were led out of Egypt by God through Moses and the next generation gained the promised land of Canaan. They are known as the people whom the Lord chose

from all the nations to be his unique, prized possession- the people after God's own heart, their bashful size in comparison to other nations of the world (Deut.7-6-8). If Israel would remain within the covenant with the electing God, she will continue to be God's treasured possession and serve as a kingdom of priests and a holy nation "v4 You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to Myself. V5 Now therefore, if you will obey my voice and keep my covenant , you shall be my own possession among all peoples; for all the earth is mine, V6 and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Ex.19:4-6.RSV). It would be set apart from other nations but also serve among them, just as was the case with priests in relation to the general common people (Neusner, 187).

The issue of election being considered in this work carries the idea of God in His divine will and counsel, choosing individuals or groups for divine purposes and it narrows down to the choice of Abraham and his descendants, the nation of Israel, for divine blessings and salvation and as it applies to the body of believers, the church of Christ.

#### **4.2.2 Views on Election**

Hattenberger said that, the main debate revolving around election relates to the reason behind God's choice of sinners to salvation. Does God choose to save in

response to man's faith? Or does man respond in faith because of God's choice? The questions go on and on. And also, if you can't tell, this debate will involve other issues of theology, including the nature of God's sovereignty, man's free will, the nature of sin, and etc. Those who hold to a high view of God's sovereignty believe that Christians believe in Jesus only because God chose them first. Those who esteem free will see that believers are chosen by God only because they chose Him first. Then of course, there are views that try to find a healthy middle — this middle view seeks to see an exchange between God and man. God seeks first, convicts and enables by His Spirit, and then waits for an assisted response from man. In this sense, they see salvation as synergistic, being of God and man. With that said, there are four main views on this doctrine of election. And, they cover the grid concerning God's sovereignty and man's free will (Internet: Accessed on 15/01/2024).

#### **4.2.2.1 Conditional Election**

This view holds that, God chooses us only in response to our free choice of Him. In this sense, our election is conditioned to our response of faith to Jesus (though people who espouse this view would of course agree that sinners need the drawing and enabling of the Spirit to believe — in that way, election is conditioned upon God as well). When we respond with faith in Christ, God then

elects us. Because God exhaustively knows all events, He can know from the foundation of the world of those who will respond in faith. In this sense, God chooses us before we believe, but only in response to our future faith. (Hattenberger)

Conditional election In Christian theology (Wikipedia) is the belief that God chooses for eternal salvation those whom he foresees will have faith in Christ. This belief emphasizes the importance of a person's free will. The counter-view is known as unconditional election, and is the belief that God chooses whomever he will, based solely on his purposes and apart from an individual's free will. It has long been an issue in Calvinist–Arminian debate. The doctrine of conditional election is most often associated with the Arminian churches. The Arminians have defended their belief against the doctrine of other Calvinist churches since the early 17th century when they submitted the following statement of doctrine to the Reformed Churches of the Low Countries: (as stated in the five points of Calvinism)

That God, by an eternal, unchangeable purpose in Jesus (according to Arminian doctrine) Christ His Son, before the foundation of the world, hath determined, out of a fallen, sinful race of men, to save in Christ, for Christ's sake, and through Christ, those who, through the grace of the Holy Spirit, shall believe on this his Son Jesus, and shall persevere in this faith and obedience of faith, through this grace, even to the end; and, on the other hand, to leave the incorrigible and unbelieving in sin and under wrath, and to

condemn them as alienate from Christ, according to the word of the gospel in John 3:36: "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him "(KJV) and according to other passages of Scripture also (Accessed on 15/01/2024).

Proponents of conditional election put forth some Bible passages as evidence to buttress their argument that human volition, not just divine action, plays a central role in salvation:

Deuteronomy 30:19: "I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life that both thou and thy seed may live."

Joshua 24:15: "And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

The Arminian doctrine agrees that the influence of sin has so inhibited the individual's volition that no one is willing or able to come to or follow God, but the Arminian doctrine of prevenient (or enabling) grace is considered sufficient to enable a person to repent and believe before regeneration. Based upon God's foreknowledge of each individual human response to the gospel of Jesus Christ, God justly and sovereignly elects to salvation those He foresees exercising free

will to repent, believe in the gospel of Jesus Christ and follow God (Wikipedia: accessed).

#### **4.2.2.2 Corporate Election**

Jacob Arminius held this position. Arminius says that, election is “the decree by which God is resolved to justify believers [in Christ] but to condemn unbelievers” — so, God’s election is that those in Christ would be saved. In this way, when Paul says in Ephesians 1 that God chose believers in Christ, it is the “in Christ” that is God’s corporate choice. This view holds that just as God chose the nation of Israel corporately, so God chose the body of Christ/the church to be the corporate body to which he bestows salvation. What this means is that God didn’t choose individuals to save; rather, he chose a body in which all who desire salvation must enter. God elected that the means to salvation would be in Christ (Hattenberger).

Brian Abasciano in Donald C. Stamps’, *Life in the Spirit Study Bible*, said “Most simply, corporate election refers to the choice of a group, which entails the choice of its individual members by virtue of their membership in the group. Thus, individuals are not elected as individuals directly, but secondarily as members of the elect group. Nevertheless, corporate election necessarily entails a type of individual election because of the inextricable connection between any group and

the individuals who belong to it. Individuals are elected as a consequence of their membership in the group.” (1854)

Robert Shank argues in favour of this view that Calvin’s doctrine of Unconditional election and reprobation of particular people has no foundation in the scriptures. He contests the Bible passages used to support Calvinists’ stand on election as not applicable. He argues their use only circumvents the most explicitly categorical affirmations of scripture. The election of grace does not rule out the salvation of any man, and that God truly wills all men to be saved. The cross is the central point of election and the event in which stage and infinity find their standpoint (156). This view is only accepted among Arminians and those who follow the teachings of Jacob Arminius. It is faulty because if in Christ God has chosen to save those who desire to be saved and come into the Church; the body of Christ, then, salvation becomes the matter of man’s choice. It is man therefore that elects himself for salvation not God making the choice again. And this makes salvation the matter of one coming into the church and being a member only, just because God has elected to save people in Christ. But Christ himself did say “V21 Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my father who is in heaven. V22 On that day many will say to me, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in our name? V23 And then will I declare



to them, I never knew you; depart from me, you evildoers” (Matt.7:21 – 23RSV). And in another instance, Jesus Christ also said “No one can come to me unless the father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day” (John 6: 44 RSV). And “For many are called, but few are chosen” (Matt. 22:44RSV). From these sayings of Christ, it is clear that the choice is God’s prerogative and not man’s. Man cannot choose to save himself. God chooses to save man. And not every member of the Church will be saved, because some are in the Church to perpetrate evil, no wonder Jesus said he will call them evildoers. And so this view is not acceptable for it doesn’t represent the will of the Bible.

#### **4.2.2.3 Congruent Election**

Hattenberger stated that, this view, though similar to conditional election has a nuanced difference. This view holds that since God dwells in eternity, he sees all things eternally now. He sees all peoples and events, past present and future, as if it was all right now. In this sense, God sees all believers all at the same time, and he sovereignly chooses them from his eternal-now-perspective. But, because men dwell in time, and make free choices, they also choose to believe in Christ from their perspective. In this way, from one side, God unconditionally chooses us in eternity, but we also conditionally choose God in time — thus, election is congruent. Norman Geisler espouses this view in his book ‘Chosen but Free. He

argued against the popular Calvinist view of election based on God's sovereign counsel alone, that, man has a part to play. God knows and sees everything and so foresaw the people that will be willing to repent and accept Jesus Christ, so He chose them even before they repented, so that when the time He foresaw them repenting comes, they will repent and accept Jesus Christ (123-142). This view takes away the sovereignty of God in election and places man in the position of choosing God at his own (man's) will to be saved.

#### **4.2.2.4 Unconditional Election**

Hattenberger noting that, unconditional election is part of the larger doctrine of Calvinism (the above three are expressions of Arminianism), argues that God chooses whom he wills to save in love, not as a result of any foreseen response or merit in man, but rather based on his sovereign pleasure and desire to have mercy. This means his love is unmerited and unconditional — it is not contingent upon anything in the receiver. And because it was God's choice to save and not man's, our choice to receive the forgiveness found in Jesus is resultant of God's choice to pursue and save us. God's love for His elect causes and compels Him to redeem them through Christ's sacrifice. So then, before the foundation of the world, God unconditionally purposed to redeem individual sinners through Christ's death and resurrection. Michael Horton, other Calvinists and reformers like White James,

Sproul, and the Babingers agree that, unconditional election is one aspect of predestination in which God chooses certain individuals to be saved. The persons elected receive mercy, while those that are not elected the reprobates, receive justice without condition. The unconditional election is basically related to the rest of the TULIP doctrinal outline and centres on the supreme belief in the complete sovereignty of God over the affairs of man. God unconditionally elects certain people even though they are sinful as an act of his Summary saving grace apart from the shortcomings or sinful will of man. Those elected have done nothing to deserve the grace. Calvinist Millard J. Erickson caps it by stating that “The Calvinist affirms that since God has elected certain individuals out of the mass of fallen humanity to receive eternal life, and those so chosen will necessarily come to receive eternal life, it follows that there must be a permanence to their salvation. If the elect could at some point lose their salvation, God's election of them to eternal life would not be truly effectual, thus, the doctrine of election as understood by the Calvinist requires perseverance as well” (329).

There's quite a number of Bible passages that support the unconditional election, few of them quoted from KJV include: Isaiah 42:1: “Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect Chosen One, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles.”

John 1:12,13: “But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”

Acts 13:48: “And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.”

Romans 9:15–16: “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. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.”

Romans 9:22–24: “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: And that, He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had afore prepared unto glory, Even us, whom He hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?”

Ephesians 1:4–5: “According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love: Having predestined us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will.”

Ephesians 1:11: “In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will.”

Philippians 1:29: “For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake.”

1 Thessalonians 1:4–5: “Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God. For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake.”

2 Thessalonians 2:13: “But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.”

3 Timothy 1:9: “Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.”

### **4.3 The Conception of Election**

As we are considering God’s election of the people of Israel and the Church, we have to consider the Biblical view of election. The Bible according to Berkhof speaks of election in more than one sense. There is (1) the election of Israel as a

people for special privileges and for special service (Deut.4:37; 7:6-8; 10:15; Hos.13:5). (2) The election of individuals to some office, or to the performance of some special services, as Moses, Ex.3; the Priests, Deut. 18:5; the Kings, 1 Sam.10:24; Ps. 78:80; the Prophets, Jer.1:5; and the Apostles, John 6:70; Acts 9:15. (3) The election of individuals to be children of God and heirs of eternal glory Matt. 22:14; Rom. 11:5; 1Cor. 1:27, 28; Eph. 1:4; 1Thess.1:4; 1 Pet.1:2; 2Pet.1:10.

Berkhof further explained that, the third or last one is the election that is considered as part of predestination. It can be defined as, that eternal act of God whereby He, in His sovereign good pleasure, and on account of no foreseen merit in them, chooses a certain number of men to be the recipients of special grace and of eternal salvation. More briefly it may be said to be God's eternal purpose to save some of the human race in and by Jesus Christ (Berkhof, 114).

The Interpreters Dictionary said, it is the Religious conviction that God has chosen one out of a group of individuals, peoples, tribes, cities, or temples, established a unique and exclusive relationship with it, and imposed specific functions, obligations or authority upon it. It further states that, the most important usages have to do with (a) kings and priests, (b) the fathers of Israel, (c) the city of Jerusalem. It explained that, the first two – kings and priests; fathers of Israel –

usages are continued in the New Testament in the election of Jesus Christ and of the 12, and of the Church as a religious community (76).

This is understandable by the fact that, God had from the time of old been choosing individuals for special duties. He chose Moses as the instrument to lead Israel out of Egypt. And Moses laid the foundation of God guided leadership in Israel. Later God chose Saul (1Sam. 10) as Israel's first king; David as second king (1Sam. 16); Solomon as the third king (2 Sam 12:24, 25; 1Kgs1:32 – 40), Hazael, king of Aram (1Kgs. 19:15), Jehu king of Israel; and Elisha to be prophet (1Kgs.19:16). God chose others to be Priests – Aaron and his sons (Eod.29: 4 – 8), Samuel (1 Sam. 3:19-21). We can also say that Abraham was chosen and then given the covenant to be an everlasting one, from generation to generation. It continued with Isaac and later Jacob and Jacob's twelve sons who formed the twelve tribes of Israel. Jesus came through the family line of David. And the fact that Jesus chose twelve Disciples shows continuity of the nation of Israel. And these twelve later became Apostles (people who are sent) to take the Message of salvation to all the nations of the world (Matt.28:18-20). Believers in Jesus Christ by faith, becomes heirs, with Jesus Christ. And so it is not out of place to say that, election continues in Jesus Christ.

Jewett noted that, to speak of election is to speak of a concept rooted in the Old Testament teaching, that out of the whole human family, God chose Abraham,

Sarah and their descendants to be His unique people. Israel is that blessed nation whose God is the Lord, the people whom He has chosen (bhr) as His heritage (Ps. 33:12) (Jewett, 24).

According to the Dictionary of the Old Testament, the concept of the election of Israel emerges first in the speech of Moses in the book of Deuteronomy. As Moses reviews the Pentateuchal story, he uses election to tie the present generation at the edge of the land to the previous crucial events in the narrative: The election of the ancestors, the deliverance from Egypt and the giving of the law at Sinai. The concept does not function to describe directly the previously narrated events in a positivistic manner. The term functions more subtly and powerfully, it provides an interpretive summary of the previous narrative that the character Moses uses to incorporate ‘you’ both Israel at the edge of the promised land and the contemporary reader, into the story summarized in Moses’ speeches and thus the story told in the first place from Genesis 12 onward. Moses’ narrative recapitulation uses *bahar* to highlight the significant events of the story and thereby, to reinterpret it all as a story of Yahweh’s election of Israel.

Further, Dictionary of the Old Testament said Election similarly is used to tie the audience to Moses’ speech to the covenant given to make Israel ‘my treasured possession (*segulla*)... a priestly kingdom and a holy nation (Ex 19:5b-6).



In Deut. 7, where Moses reviews the story of Israel, he uses *bahar* to refer to the covenant at Sinai. He interprets Yahweh's words there in terms of election and again ties his audience to a previous point in the story through the second person plural pronoun (Deut.7:6-8 and 14:2). Moses' interpretation of the earlier narrative grounds Yahweh's election of Israel at the edge of the promised land in Yahweh's love for Israel; a love also seen in Yahweh's faithfulness to the promise given to the ancestors (217).

As in the speeches of Moses, *bahar* refers to a previous section of the Pentateuch in Moses' repetition of Yahweh's command. In this situation, however, the term justifies the commandment to financially support the priests from the sacrificial system. The priests may eat the sacrifices that are the Lord's portion..., for the Lord your God has chosen (*bahar*) Levi out of all your tribes, to stand and minister in the name of the Lord, him and his sons for all time (Deut.18:1b, 5). The verse summarises the narrative of Numbers 16:1-17. The term *bahar* ties the narrative and the legislation together to provide a rationale for the regulation. Yahweh's election of the priests eventually places upon the Israelites the necessity of providing for their material wellbeing (2017-2018).

*Bahar* also anticipates a place in the future for the center of the worship and sacrifice to Yahweh. Even as the concept of election summarises and interprets

previous narrative events, it also foreshadows a narrative event in 1Kings in the construction of the temple in Jerusalem. Various formulas express the same concept, “the place that the Lord your God will choose as a dwelling for his name. (Deut.12:11). The temple is not an arbitrary location. When it is built at an unspecified future time and place, it will represent the specific location for the fulfilment of the commands for the sole place for the sacrificial system in the worship of Yahweh. Its divine election will make it, when it appears, the only legitimate temple to Yahweh. The elect people will gather at the elect temple under the guidance of the elect priests (218).

One final significant occurrence of the term arises in the commandments of Deuteronomy 12-26. The election of a king as indicated within the laws of the king (Deut. 17:15). Again, the term *bahar* points forward to a future narrative. “V14 when you come to the land which the Lord your God gives you, and you possess it and dwell in it, and then say, ‘I will set a king over me like all the nations that are round about me’ V15 you may indeed set as king over you him whom the Lord your God will choose. One from among your brethren you shall set as king over you, you may not put a foreigner over you who is not your brother” (Deut.17:14, 15). The text anticipates a future event of a final divine election; a king to reign over Israel in the land. While the king is not involved in as many laws as the future temple, the king is no less elected than the temple. The verse anticipates again an

unspecified event of the divine election of a king over Israel after the Israelites enter the land. Election in the Pentateuch looks beyond the chronology of the Pentateuch to anticipate future events in the story of Israel. The king rounds out the list of the elect; an elect nation arising from the key events of the calling of the ancestors, the deliverance from Egypt, and the giving of the covenant at Sinai that will live in the promised land around an elect temple with elect priests; all under the jurisdiction of an elect king. Divine election, therefore, summarises significant events and institutions within the story of Israel, from its inception to its full establishment in the Promised Land especially as reviewed in the words of Moses (218).

Therefore, it is Deuteronomy that emphasizes Yahweh's election of Israel through the Pentateuch narrative. Yet such an election does not nullify the necessity of Israel's election of Yahweh. Yahweh's election of Israel is what permits Israel's election of Yahweh through keeping the covenant. In the confirmation of the covenant given in Deuteronomy, Moses concludes by saying in 30:19,20 "V19 I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse, so choose life, that you and your descendants may live, V20 loving the Lord your God, obeying His voice and cleaving to Him, for that means life to you and length of days, that you may dwell in the land which the Lord swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to

Jacob, to give them”. Election runs both ways between God and God’s people, though God’s election of Israel has a narrative, theological and logical priority over Israel’s election of Yahweh (218).

Election arises as a significant concept in Moses speech to Israel that recapitulates and marks the events in the divine calling of Israel in the book of Deuteronomy. It also arises in Moses’ repetition of divine speech in the future establishment of a temple and a king in Israel. In this retrospective and prospective function of the concept, the word gathers significance. The concept calls for a particular people, Israel, to live faithfully in covenant with Yahweh as God’s treasured possession and thus as a holy nation, a kingdom of priests. It is communal, not individualistic, concept about the life of the people of God in the world. In Israel’s distinct identity and communal formation in the world, living by the covenant around the elect temple under the elect king, election provides a narrative summary of the main story line of the torah that points to the vocation of Israel. Through their contemporary election, God calls Israel in fulfilment of God’s promise to Abraham. They became the people through whom “all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (Gen.12:3). Election thereby serves as an interpretative concept of the plot of the Pentateuch and beyond (218).

## 4.4 Characteristics of Election

According to Berkhof, election has basically six characteristics. I will outline them here in passing as stated by Berkhof.

1. It is an expression of the sovereign will of God, His divine good pleasure. This means that, Christ as the mediator is not the impelling, moving or meritorious cause of election.
2. Election is immutable, and therefore renders the salvation of the elect certain. God realizes the decree of election by His own efficiency, by the saving work which He accomplishes in Jesus Christ. It is His purpose that certain individuals should believe and persevere unto the end, and He secures this result by the objective work of Christ, and the objective operations of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:29, 30; 11:29; 2Tim. 2:19).
3. It is eternal, that is, from eternity. This divine election should never be identified with any temporal selection, whether it be for the enjoyment of the special grace of God in this life, for special privileges and responsible services, or for the inheritance of glory hereafter, but must be regarded as eternal (Rom. 8:29, 30; Eph.1:4, 5).
4. It is unconditional. Election does not in any way depend on the foreseen faith or good works of man, as the Arminians teach, but exclusively on the sovereign good pleasure of God, who is also the originator of faith and good works (Rom.9:11; Acts13:48; 2Tim.1:9; 1Pet.1:2).
5. It is irresistible. This does not mean that man cannot oppose its execution to a certain degree, but it does mean that, his opposition will not prevail. Neither does it mean that God in the execution of His decree overpowers the human will in a manner which is inconsistent with man's free agency. It does mean however, that God can and does exert such an influence on the human spirit as to make it willing (Ps.110:3; Phil.2:13).

6. It is not chargeable with injustice. The fact that God favours some and passes by others does not warrant the charge that He is guilty of injustice (Berkhof, 114-115).

#### **4.5 The Grounds of Election**

Murray JOF, (1988) had this to say on grounds of election:

The ground of a man's choice has not so much in him as in the object that he chooses. It is of course true that his own personality governs what the potentials in an object will and what will not, prove attractive to him. But for all that, it is the actual or hypothetical attractiveness of the object that determines his choice. It would be normal consequently, to accept that the choice of God is in the same way determined by the attractiveness of its object. But it is fast at this point that the analogy of the human will is essentially defective. It is not, indeed that we are required to believe that God can love that which is, in itself, neither lovely nor capable of developing loveliness; but that since the root of all loveliness is in God, and since there can be no goodness apart from Him, we cannot argue as if it were possible for men to own or develop any goodness or loveliness independent of their creator, and so founding a claim on, the choice of God. We should not consequently, be stunned when we find Israel explicitly warned in Holy Scripture not to accept the flattering postulation that they had been chosen on the grounds of their own innate attractiveness. They were not as a nation either more numerous or more amenable to the divine discipline than other nations (Dt.7:7; 9:6). We can understand why St. Paul declares that the election of Christians does not depend on the will or the energy of men (Rom.9:16). It is not of works but of grace Rom.11:6; cf. Jn.1:13) (679).

Murray is right for God in His great wisdom does His own plans and executes them when, where and how He deems fit. What on earth will make man so attractive to God so as to depend on man's qualities for his action? Is it the sins of man, or his reasoning, or his thoughts? In man, God had earlier seen no good when as stated "The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Gen.6:5

RSV). When man fall, he lost the status he had at creation, therefore any good coming to man henceforth from his creator depended entirely on God's love and out of divine mercy for man, and has nothing to be counted from man's magnetism.

It must therefore be a mistake to try to discover the ultimate ground of God's choice in any consideration drawn from outside Him, even though it is in His foreknowledge of the faith and obedience of His chosen, for the goodness in which He takes delight is, after all from first to last His own creation. The testimony of scripture is not, however, really limited to his negative result. The choice which is not determined from without is all the more certainly determined from within. And the ground of the choice which we are forbidden to look for in ourselves or in human nature is expressly declared to lie in the love (Deut.7:8), and the faithfulness (Deut.9:5; Rom.11:29), and the mercy of our God (Rom.9:16).

#### **4.6 Purposes of Election**

The main purpose of election in the secular society is to give people a chance to choose the representatives, the government and the policies they prefer. That is to say, elections are conducted with the purpose of choosing new set of leaders, or replacing those removed, or dead or might have resigned; or to change leadership , or change a policy.

In everything God does, one will see a purpose for doing it. And as it is in God's nature to do everything purposefully, election cannot be without purposes.

Berkhof said that the purposes of eternal election are twofold:

- (1) The proximate purpose is the salvation of the elect. That man is elected or chosen unto salvation is clearly taught in the word of God (Rom.:7-11; 2Thes.2:13).
- (2) The final aim is the glory of God. Even the salvation of man is subordinate to this. That the glory of God is the highest purpose of the electing grace is made very emphatic in Eph. 1:6, 12, 14 (115).

Berkhof has made the summary of the purposes. Whatever may be said falls under these two broad headings he has postulated: election is for man's good and for God's glory. Right from creation, these two things stand out clearly. God created everything the way He did to prepare secure, peaceful and convenient environment for man's good. Man was to take charge and enjoy God's creation and glorify his Maker. Man was made to glorify God. God made man imago Dei, in God's image to postulate the Glory of his Maker. After the fall into sin, rendering almost God's design flawed, God decided to redeem His image through the saving work of Jesus Christ. And the purpose is to save man and glorify Himself over the enemy who



enslaved man because of sin and jubilated. Election saves the elect from the devil, from eternal damnation, the devil is put to shame and God is glorified.

The Illustrated Bible Dictionary states that the purpose of Israel's election was proximately the blessing and salvation of the people through God's separating them for Himself (Ps. 79:1-3; 96:1-10) and being witness of the great things He had done (Isa 43:10-12; 44:8). Israel's election involved separation. By it, God made Israel a holy people, i.e. are set apart for Himself (Deut. 7:6; Lev 20: 26b). He took them as His inheritance (Deut. 4:20; 32:9-12) and treasure (Ex 19:5; Ps 135:4), promising to protect and prosper them (Deut. 28:1-14) and to dwell with them (Lev 26:11f). Election made them His people, and He their God, in covenant together. It had in view living communion between them and Him. Their destiny as His chosen people, was to enjoy His manifested presence in their midst and to receive the horde of good gifts which He promised to shower upon them. Their election was thus an act of blessing which was the front of all other blessings. Hence the prophets expressed the hope that God would restore His people and presence to Jerusalem after the exile and re-establish conditions of blessings there, by saying that God will again choose Israel and Jerusalem (Isa 14:1; Zach 1:17; 2:12, cf. 3:2).

Pink calls God's purposes in election as designs and state that they are four.

These include:

1. God's design in our election was that we should be holy.
2. God's desires that in election we should be His sons.
3. God's design in our election that we should be saved.
4. God's design in our election was that we should be for Christ (77-83).

Pink here talks of the purposes as applied to both the Israel of old and the New Israel in Christ Jesus. However the issue of salvation is not made so clear from the beginning though it is implied, God in His infinite fore-knowledge plans to prepare a way of saving man from eternal damnation through the chosen Israel. When God said to Abram "And I will make of you a great nation and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who curses you I will curse, and by you all the families of the earth shall bless themselves" (Gen.12:2, 3 RSV). It means that it is through the chosen Abraham that man will find rest and the rest and blessings came through Jesus Christ. What can we say; is there greater blessing than the gift of life and life eternal? All what God said to Abraham finds fulfilment. Egypt cursed Israel by enslaving them and God cursed Egypt with backwardness, and the land where civilization started is now not ranked among developed nations, but a developing

nation. God has blessed the nations with Christ Jesus who gave His life for the salvation of all the nations of the earth to have life eternal; “For God loved the world so much that He gave His one and only son, so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life” (Jn.3:16 NLT)

All what people say as purposes of election can better be seen in four areas.

#### **4.6.1 Election is for Service**

Election as it concerns man involves service. If a representative or president is chosen, he is chosen for service to his people and to his country. The elector expects the elected to serve. God elects people or groups to serve His divine purpose. Rowley (1950) emphasised that God chose Israel for service. He delivered them from bondage in Egypt to bring them to Himself so that they will serve Him (45). Some people even argue that Israel’s election was only for service. We cannot rule out the idea of service, but we can also see other aspects in the election of Israel. God chose Moses for service to deliver Israel from Egypt. Aaron, Samuel, Eli were chosen by God to serve as priests. God even chose Babylon for service to punish the recalcitrant Israel. Klein remarks that God’s choice of Israel was for the purpose that she would serve Him (37)

#### **4.6.2 Election is for unto Salvation**

Zaspel wrote that, Election to salvation is one aspect or dimension of God's all-inclusive decree: God has predestined us "according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of His will" (Eph. 1:11). Theologians often helpfully categorize the various aspects of salvation as salvation planned, accomplished, and applied; election is salvation planned. In this plan God the Father chose whom he would save and sent his Son to save them (John 6:37-40). Those who were "chosen" (Eph. 1:4, etc.) are also described as "given" to the Son (John 6:37, 39; 10:29; 17:2, 6-12, 24) and as his "sheep" whom he came to save (John 10:11, 15, 16), Indeed, it is because they electively belong to Christ that they hear His voice and inevitably come to Him when He calls (John 6:37; 10:26-27; cf. Acts 13:48; Rom. 11:7; 1Thes. 1:4-5). That is to say, our coming to faith in Christ for salvation was not an accident, and it did not stem merely from our own "decision." It was the outworking of God's own purpose from eternity (cf. Acts 13:48; Rom. 8:28-30; Eph. 1:9, 11; 2Tim. 1:9). It was God's to "choose" or "elect" whom He would save (Eph. 1:4; 1Thess. 1:4-5; 2Thes. 2:13-14) (Internet: accessed on 17/01/2024).

Geoff Thomas summarised it all, 'Salvation is all from God; He is moving in our hearts before we start moving towards Him. So we can take no credit for our

salvation; it all comes from Him. Peter and John were mending their nets when a stranger called them, “Follow me and I will make you fishers of men.” Saul of Tarsus was on his way to decimate the church in Damascus when the Lord met him on the road (Internet: accessed on 17/01/2024).

#### **4.6.3 Election is for Bestowment of Blessings**

Election is for bestowment of blessings find support in God’s words to Abraham. He was elected to receive God’s blessings, not just for himself alone but for his eternal generations. Those who God chooses, he blesses. This is part of His divine nature. And one of the promises made to Abraham was that of blessings. Assohoto and Ngewa commenting on Genesis12:2, wrote that, Abraham’s blessings will consist of many strong descendants (also Gen.15:5; 17:5; 22:17) and possession of the land of Canaan. Abraham would become a power to be reckoned with (21:22-31). As the physical ancestor of the Jews and spiritual father of all believers, his name will be found on the lips of many (see John 8:33; Acts 7:2; Gal. 3:6-9). I will bless those who bless you. God would stand with Abraham and consequently be a friend of Abraham’s friends. Whoever curses you I will curse: Those who would want to do harm to Abraham would also have to face his God and endure God’s wrath. They went on to state that, the two predictions ‘you will be blessing’ and ‘all peoples on earth will be blessed through you’ make it clear

that God's blessings are not for keeping to himself but are to be used to bless others (29). Thus, Abraham was elected to be a window through which God will bless humanity. Israel as Abraham's descendants continues to be that window of blessings to the world. Christ as elect of God blesses the world. Elects of God are windows of blessings to the world.

#### **4.6.4 Election is for the Reflection of God's Character**

Klein remarks that, God's choice of Israel was for the purpose that she would reflect his character and ways to the nations . . . . Thus Israel's election does not mean that God has rejected the other nations. Rather, election creates for Israel the task of representing God among the nations so salvation might come to them (38). Yes Israel is expected to be a holy nation for the God who has chosen them is holy. Through Israel other nations can come to the knowledge of God's holiness. Carissa Quinn wrote that, Israel is meant to faithfully represent God by how they live as a community of love, justice, and worship of Yahweh alone. This is what the law is all about. Israel is chosen for this purpose. They are called to display who Yahweh is to all the nations, so that all would come to know and worship the one true God. Salvation to the nations was not plan B. It was God's mission all along. Israel is in the perfect position to reveal God to the nations. They have seen and experienced Yahweh's power and rescue for themselves. Yet God's people

continually fail at their task by worshiping other gods and participating in injustice and oppression (e.g., Exodus 32) (accessed on 19/01/2024). It is true that Israel at many times failed to live as expected, failed to project and mirror God's character to the rest of the nations, the purpose still stands. That was why when they fail, God's wrath would rise up against them as God's chosen, but He would always preserve a remnant that would stand to mirror His character to the world.

#### **4.7.1 Merited Election**

Merited show what is to be obtained on the basis of worth. An athlete runs a 400 meter race and ends first position, the medal he is given is based on his performance. He gets the medal on merit. Merited election therefore has to do with the choice on account of the elect's worth. Merited election favours the Arminian conditional election, where man is chosen based on the fore knowledge that he is capable of and will repent and accept Jesus Christ. Storms' statement opposes this and puts it right when he said: Divine election is not based on God's foreknowledge of your faith. Faith isn't the ground of election, but its fruit. It isn't the cause of election, but its effect. We don't get chosen by God because He foresees that we choose Him. Rather we choose Him because in eternity past, He graciously chose us. Thus, God's choice of some hell-deserving sinners was not dependent on any will other than His own. Election "depends not on human will or

exertion, but on God, who has mercy” (Rom. 9:16). Thus, election is monergistic. It is the fruit or effect of one will, God’s will.

#### **4.7.2 Unmerited Election**

It is what a person receives without working for, or not meriting. Unmerited election is unconditional election. It comes out of the elector’s free will. White, storms, Calvin agree that it is unconditional because His decision to elect does not depend on anything inherent in any person chosen, on any act that a person performs or on any belief that a person exercises. Indeed, according to the doctrine of total depravity (the first of the five points of Calvinism), the influence of sin has so repressed the individual's desire that no one is prepared or able to come to or follow God apart from God first renewing the person's soul to give them the capability to love Him and take part in the salvation process. Hence, God's choice in election is and can only be based solely on God's own independent and sovereign will and not upon the foreseen actions of man.



## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **ELECTION OF ISRAEL BY GOD**

#### **5.1 Meaning of Israel's Election by God**

What does it mean to say that God has chosen Israel? And what does it mean for Israel as a people and as a nation? Jacob (1959) wrote that, Election is one of the central realities of the Old Testament; even though it is less frequently mentioned than the covenant, it is however the initial act by which Yahweh comes into relation with his people and the permanent reality which assures the constancy of that bond. Every intervention by God in history is an election: either when He chooses a place in which to make more special manifestation of His presence, or when He chooses a man to be the representative or His messenger (201). Election is very crucial in God's dealings with mankind. When he elects someone for a task, it is then that an intimate relationship is developed. When He chose Noah, an intimate relationship developed. When he chose Moses, cordiality started and developed to the extent that Moses is sometimes referred to as the friend of God. When He chooses a person, he reveals Himself in special ways to the person. Really election becomes the medium through which man enjoys special favours from his creator.

Jewett wrote that, the root of the Biblical doctrine of Election is the concept that Israel, as God's chosen people is the object of His unmerited love. Aware as they were that God's love could not be grounded in their own worth, Israel's self-understanding was summed up in the words of Deuteronomy 14:2 (cf.7:6) "For you are a people holy to the Lord your God, and the Lord has chosen you to be a people for His own possession, out of all the peoples that are on the face of the earth". Hence in the oracle of Balaam, they are described as 'a people dwelling alone, and not reckoning itself among the nations' (Num.23:9) (30).

To the writers of the Old Testament (OT), Israel is the chosen people of God; to the writers of the New Testament, the heirs of election is the Church (Rowley: 15).

Reading through (Deut. 7:6-8; 10:14-15; 14:2; Ps 33:12; 65:4; 106:5; Hag 2:23; Acts 13:17; Rom 9:11; 11:28), and many other portions of the Scripture, Israel is referred to as God's elect nation, His chosen people, His own possession. Loraine Boethner was categorically accurate when he wrote that "Throughout the Old Testament it is repeatedly stated that the Jews were a chosen people" (88).

The Biblical tradition has it that God chose Abraham's seed by redeeming them from slavery in Egypt under Moses, renewing the Abrahamic covenant with an amplified form at Sinai and setting them in the promised land as their national

home (Exod.3:6-10; Deut.6:21-23;etc.). The passage in Deut.7:8 brings the deliverance from Egypt through Moses into relation with the election in Abraham, and declare that, it was in loyalty to his oath to the patriarchs that he brought them forth. Rowley rightly defines this relationship by saying that the people were elected 'in Abraham' and elected 'through Moses' (31). And Ringgren quoted Begrich as saying; 'through Moses, the people received their consecration as God's people. The person of Moses plays a part of the first importance in the forming of the elected people into a nation, and it is the reality which cements the unity and the faith of the people. It is seen that Moses is only the intermediary but it is the people as a whole that is the beneficiary of election. In the same way, the deliverance from Egypt and the subsequent covenant upon Sinai were probably considered God's act of election (117). Moses mediated the covenant making, but God was entering into a pact with His chosen people, Israel.

Myers observed that, by choosing Israel as His people, God elected the nation to be the vehicle through which the prophets would record God's Word and Jesus would arrive as the promised Messiah. This sort of view of election allows God to elect Israel as His chosen people, but does not require that every single individual person within Israel receive eternal life from God.

Marston and Forster summarised that, God's election of people or nations is not to all to receive eternal life, but rather, to play a role or fulfil a purpose in His divine plan. This understanding of election allows God to elect entire nations, not because He plans to get them all into heaven, but because He plans to call that nation to some purpose within world history. God chose Israel, not because He decided to redeem every Israelite, but because He decided to use Israel to play an important role in bringing about redemption for the entire world (139). As earlier explained, Israel became a window through which God's favours and blessings will flow to mankind as He had said to Abraham, 'through you all the families of the earth shall be blessed'.

## **5.2 Why God Chose Israel**

The reason(s) for God's choice of Israel is God Himself, and He stated clearly, "for you are a people holy to the Lord your God; the Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for His own possession, out of all the people that are on the face of the earth. It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the Lord set his love upon you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples, but it is because the Lord loves you, and is keeping the oath which He swore to your fathers, that the Lord has brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of bondage, from the hand of pharaoh, king of

Egypt” (Deut.7:6-8). It is clear that Israel’s choice is out of God’s sovereign divine will and counsel. Not that Israel met any set qualification or standard. God’s absolute love for Israel merited her for election to special favours unconditionally.

Mariottini basing on Deut.7:7, 8, stressed that, the choice of Israel to be a special people, at its most basic meaning, testifies to the fact of unmerited grace. God did not choose Israel because they were worthy of being chosen. In fact, God chose a people who were slaves in Egypt, redeemed them and established a special relationship with them. The point that the writer of Deuteronomy was trying to convey to the new generation of Israelites was that it was because of God’s faithful love (*hesed*) and because of the promise he had made to Abraham that He, in His sovereignty, elected Israel to be His special people and His special possession. God told Israel on Mount Sinai: “Out of all the nations you will be my own special possession” (Exodus 19:5).

The basis for God’s promise to Israel was the covenant He had established with Abraham. At Sinai, Israel responded to what God had done in bringing them out of Egypt and to His revelation by establishing a covenant with Him and by agreeing to be His people and live in accordance with His commandments.

Thus, it was at Sinai that Israel became God’s special people. God had established a covenant with Abraham, choosing him to be the father of a great and

mighty nation. Now, as the people understood their mission in the world and their place in the redemptive work of God, the people accepted their call and destiny as the elected nation of God: “And all the people answered together and said, ‘all that the LORD has spoken, we will do’” (Exodus 19:8). Israel became a special nation not because they were great and mighty, but because of the sovereign grace of the God who had delivered them from Egyptian bondage (internet: Accessed on 15/01/2024).

Craigie, P.C., (1976) said Israel’s election has two dimensions: negative and positive. The two dimensions found expression in Deut. 7:7-8. According to him, negatively, they were not chosen on the basis of their numerical strength; they were numerically a very small people in the context of other Near Eastern peoples and nations. Positively, they were chosen because the Lord loved them; the reason for God’s special love though it contained within it a purpose, remains essentially a mystery (179-180). It is important to note that, God’s choice of Israel was not based on numerical strength, but it’s not to be forgotten that numerical strength was one of the covenant promises God made to the patriarchs since Abraham as seen in Gen.12:2; 15:5; 17:2. The fact is that, Terah’s family where Abram was chosen from was a very small family, a handful of persons not up to ten persons, and Abram who was chosen had no child with barren Sarai as his wife (Gen.11:27-32). More so, when God through Moses brought Israel out of Egypt, they were a

million people or thereabout, so at no point do Israel merit God's choice of them on numerical strength or on any other basis but only on God's love and sovereign will.

It is therefore not out of place to conclude that Israel was chosen by God out of divine love, will and counsel. He simply tells us, it was not for anything worthy of consideration in Israel as a nation or their forebears (for the patriarchs were idol worshippers when God chose them), but He loved Israel beginning with their forefathers and so has chosen them to be His special people, His own possession, the only chosen out of all the peoples of the earth.

### **5.3 The Purposes of God's Election of Israel**

Divine election has the glory of God as its primary purpose. In order to magnify His grace and make known the majesty of His mercy, God chose hell-deserving sinners to inherit eternal life and be joined in covenant union with His Son, Jesus Christ. He "predestined" them "for adoption as sons" (Eph. 1:5). Thus one purpose of election was to "save" hell-deserving sinners (2 Thess. 2:13; 2 Tim. 1:8-10). But in a more ultimate sense, their salvation was designed to honour and magnify the grace and glory of God (Eph. 1:6, 12). Thus, our salvation is not the sole purpose of election. We were chosen for worship! We were chosen to

“proclaim the excellences of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvellous light” (1 Peter 2:9).

Vriezen emphasised that the election of Israel is a call to service to God and to the other nations when he wrote:

The truth of Israel’s election is untruth if it is rationally understood to mean that for that reason God has rejected the nations of the world, that for that reason Israel is of more importance to God than those other nations, for Israel was only elected in order to serve God in the task of leading those other nations to God. In Israel God seeks the world. . . . For in His mercy He has called Israel to the service of His Kingdom among the nations of the earth (76).

Israel’s choice over other nations was for Israel to serve God and the rest of the nations. We had already noted that the purposes of election are service, salvation, bestowment of blessings and, reflection of God’s character. Glaser (2005) said that, “God’s covenant to bless Abraham and his family (Gen.12:2-3) is not for their own comfort, but for the blessing of all the mixed up, sinful peoples descended from Noah....The Bible is about God’s plan to bless the nations, His method is one man and his family” (67).

#### **5.4 Israel’s Election: Merited or Unmerited**

Klein rightly stated that, "Israel could not attribute her election to anything within the nation herself. Beginning with God's selection of the patriarch Abraham



(Genesis 18:18-19; cf. 12:1-4; 17:1-8; Deuteronomy 4:37), Israel owes its existence as God's people solely to His gracious, unmerited choice. The writer of Deuteronomy make this clear: The LORD did not set his affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples. But it was because the LORD loved you and kept the oath he swore to your ancestors that he brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the land of slavery . . . . (Deuteronomy 7:7-8)" (29-30). When you go through several of these passages ((Deut. 7:6-8; 10:14-15; 14:2; Ps 33:12) it is plainly stated that, this sovereign choice of God had nothing whatsoever to do with Israel being a superior nation than other nations on earth, or that they were extra wise, holy, or rich than any other nation. God's choice of Israel was according to His own divine determinations.

According to Storms (1987) "Divine election may be defined as that loving and merciful decision by God the Father to bestow eternal life upon some, but not all, hell-deserving sinners. . . One does not enter the ranks of the elect by meeting a condition, be it faith or repentance. One enters the ranks of the elect by virtue of God's free and altogether gracious choice, as a result of which he enables us to repent and believe"(30-31). Thus, the issue of who to choose rests with God in his divine, sovereign counsel. It is not based on the elect's qualities, performance or fore knowledge of what he or she would do. Therefore Israel cannot lay claim to

anything in her as a nation to deserve or merit God's choice. She was chosen just because God loved her. The reason for God's love to Israel is mystery to us. And we need not question to know.

### **5.5 God's love, Grace and Sovereign Will**

It is that unending, unconditional affection and charm of God that is keeping the world to this day by His self-determining spirit. He is relating with man not based on what man can do for Him, but because of the love He has for man who He made. It is this divine love and grace that He deems it fit by divine counsel to elect to save hell-bound man for his kingdom, for salvation, for eternal life and rest.

Berkhof, Glaser, Hodge, Erickson, White generally agree with Steven Lawson when he clearly stated that, the sovereignty of God is the free exercise of His supreme authority in executing and administering His eternal purposes. God must be sovereign if He is to be truly God. A god who is not sovereign is not God at all. Such is an imposter, an idol, a mere caricature formed in man's fallen imagination. A god who is less than fully sovereign is not worthy of our worship, much less our witness. But the Bible proclaims for all to hear that "the Lord reigns" (Ps. 93:1). God is exactly who Scripture declares He is. He is the sovereign Lord of heaven and earth, whose supreme authority is over all. This is the main

premise of Scripture (Accessed on 18/01/2024). Throughout the Biblical narratives, God's sovereignty rings.

Nowhere is God's sovereignty more clearly demonstrated than in His salvation of the lost. God is free to bestow His saving mercy on whom He pleases. God says, "I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy" (Ex. 33:19b; Rom. 9:15). He is not obligated to extend His grace to any undeserving sinner. If He were to choose to save none, He would remain perfectly just. He might determine to save a few and still be absolutely holy. Or He could choose to save all. But God is sovereign, and that means He is entirely free to bestow His grace however He wills—whether on none, few, or all.

Mariottini noted that, God chose Israel to become a paradigm to the nations. Israel was to be an example of what it means to be a people who live according to God's laws and teachings. Perhaps God saw fit to take a people who were slaves in a foreign land, a people rejected by society, with no laws, organization, or government in order to demonstrate his power and salvation to the world (Accessed). Man could not have chosen such a lowly, infidel, poor, rejected people to be His special possession, rather he would have looked for a civilized nation like Egypt then or today's America or China or Germany or United Kingdom for his choice. But God's sovereign love and will found Israel the lowly one. Abraham

was picked from the mud, an idol worshipper, with no child, whose hope was on Elieser, a slave he owed, who became the progenitor of Israelite nation. And about Israel Mariottini wrote that, Israel was not only small in number, but they were also hard-hearted, stiff-necked, and a stubborn people, and yet, God chose these people to be His own people. The election of Israel, therefore, is a great demonstration of God's electing love. God's love is absolutely free and unconditional and this love was bestowed on one nation out of the many nations of the world. If there was some hidden potential in Israel, the Bible does not specify it. What is clear is that Israel was chosen to be God's people by divine sovereignty and by the kind of love that only God can demonstrate. It is true what Mariottini says, God's love finds no equal among men.

God's love and grace is the centre that pervades the concept of election in the Old Testament. The recipient of this love and grace is called to service to others. God's love is never conditional. Though, as in all relationships, there must be a sense of responsibility and loyalty, and Israel's case was no exception. God established a covenant relationship with Israel on Mount Sinai. This was the day He chose the descendants of Abraham to be His own special possession. Yahweh gave himself to Israel and in return the people of Israel were to give themselves to Him. They were to abide by the covenant obligations as they had promised during the covenant making at Sinai (Exod.20:19) to be law abiding. Israel was enjoined

to keep the covenant's obligations throughout their generations in order to continue in God's favour as stated in Deuteronomy 4:40 thus:

“Therefore you shall keep His statutes and His commandments, which I command you this day, that it may go well with you, and with your children after you, and that you may prolong your days in the land which the LORD your God gives you forever.”

Election of Israel is perhaps one of the most significant ideas for understanding God's relationship with his chosen nation, the people after God's heart, Israel. Israel's election explains the fortune of Israel as God's special people in the world and provides the nation in an exclusive relationship, a relationship that God has maintained throughout the ages, despite Israel's rebellion, stiff-neckedness and waywardness.

## **5.6 Israel's Responsibilities as Elected of God**

The election of Israel as God's own special possession among all the nations of the world placed on Israel the responsibility of living for God and in service to Him as a window to reach out to the rest of the nations. According to Craigie, the Israelites were (chosen) to be a holy people because of their relationship to God, which separated them, or cut them off from other peoples and practices. Their holy

character does not indicate inherent merit, but rather divine choice; God had chosen Israel to be a people prized more highly than all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. Thus Israel's character as a holy people gave them no ground for pride, but imposed on them the responsibility of their calling (179). Craigie is not saying a different thing but agreeing that, one of the responsibilities election placed on Israel is to be holy for the God who has chosen them is also holy. Rowley wrote that, Throughout the Old Testament, the first corollary of the Divine election of Israel and the deliverance of the tribes that were in Egypt is that God lays a claim to Israel's service (45). To Kidner, Election implies a purpose. And thus in the course of time Israel came to understand its election as being purposeful. Israel was chosen in order that a particular plan of God might be realized. The promises made to the patriarchs define the purpose of the election as follows: "By you, all the families of the earth will be blessed (Gen. 12:3; cf. 18:18; etc.). In fact, they are most closely related to the ideas of Deutero-Isaiah, when the latter says that Israel is to be "a light to the nations"(Isa.42:6). This is a part of the first 'servant song', where the servant is associated with 'Israel' (cf. Isa. 41:8f.) (612-613). Kidner is in essence emphasizing the fact that, Israel has to serve as a window through which the rest of the nations can see God and come to the right knowledge of Him. Klein said Israel is to reflect God's character to the world (38). Rowley further reiterated that, the responsibility given to the servant is to bring forth truth (mispat) to the

nations. Moreover, Israel's election was not merely for herself and God. It is that her election was for service to the world, for she had a mission to the nations. It is in Deutero-Isaiah that one finds monotheism as central to his whole theology (Isa.45:5; 44:8). Monotheism necessarily implies universalism. That is to say, if God is one and there is no other, then He must be the God of all men, and if men are to have any true religion, He it is that they must worship. If, then, they are to worship rightly, they must come to know Him and His will (62). And this knowledge of God has to come to the rest of the world through Israel and her prophets. Thus we find Israel's Prophets prophesying to and against the nations of the world, not limiting their prophecies to Israel. Prophet Elijah anointed Hasael to be king over Syria (1Kgs.19:15), Isaiah prophesied to Moab, Babylon, Assyria, Philistia, Damascus, Egypt, Ethiopia, Tyre and the Whole world (Isa.10:5-24:23), Jeremiah also had oracles concerning Moab, Philistia, Egypt, Ammon, Edom, Damascus, Kedar, Elam, Babylon (Jer.46:2-50:46), Amos first prophesied to foreign nations like Damascus, Tyre, Edom, Gaza, Ammon, Moab (Amos 1:3-2:3) before coming back home to Israel and Judah. Jonah son of Amittai was sent exclusively to Nineveh (Jonah 1-4). Salvation came through Jesus Christ but He gave the Disciples the command to evangelise the whole world for salvation as He gave the commission "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the

father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matt.28:18, 19). Thus Israel by election became responsible for showing God to the rest of the peoples of the world.

However Jacob, Rad, Edersheim, and Wiersbe generally agree with Ringgren who observed rightly that, ‘Strangely enough, the Israelites never really drew the logical conclusions that follow from this idea. Israel never attempted to contribute to the realization of this purpose through active missionary activity (117). Rowley and other scholars however maintain that, although Israel did not engage in any world-wide mission and developed a spirit of exclusiveness, yet "the post-exilic Judaism was always prepared to share its inheritance with individuals who came to share its faith, it was ever ready to receive proselytes" (87). Whether Israel got it right or not, she had a responsibility to light the nations to see, come to the true knowledge of God and to receive the salvation and blessings provided through Jesus Christ.



## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **ELECTION OF ISRAEL AND THE CHURCH TODAY**

#### **6.1 Israel's Election and the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Church**

Church here refers to the two forms of the Church: Church as institute and Church as organism. On the one hand, Church as institute, as the name indicates, refers to the institutional Church, designated and organized with hierarchical administrative structures, dogmatic learning, policy and constitutional matters, and denominational name (Bosch, 119). It is important to note that, all the denominational churches that we have today mainline or not, are institutional Churches.

Bosch further explained that, Church as organism exists within the institutional Church, which includes only members who truly have conversion experience and are in a living connection with Jesus Christ. Right now they exist within the institutional Church until the return of Christ when He will separate the weeds from the wheat (Matt. 13: 25 NIV). The other name for the organic Church includes: true Church, universal Church, and invisible Church (117). It is Invisible because no one knows the members except God. At the moment, these two forms of the Church exist in each true believer and they sometimes wage war against each other.

The Church is the body of believers of Jesus Christ, people who believe in the saving work of Jesus Christ that, He came as the only begotten Son of God, worked to show God to mankind, and gave His life and died to save man from eternal damnation. All who believe and worship God through Christ are members of His Church. The New Testament portrays Christ as the elect one of God. And Christ then chose his followers as He did say “You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you.” (Jn.15:16)

When we talk of the Church of the 21st century, it denotes the body of all the institutional Churches existing and ministering in both forms in the world. It is the aggregate sum of all the Churches obtainable and ministering presently within the altered culture of the 21st century in the world.

And the 21<sup>st</sup> century refers to the 21<sup>st</sup> one hundred years after the birth of Jesus Christ. A century is a period of one hundred years, and the period we are in today is the 21<sup>st</sup> one hundred years. 21<sup>st</sup> century started from 2001 and will end in 2100 AD. So the Church within this period is normally referred to as the Church in the 21<sup>st</sup> century or 21<sup>st</sup> century Church. The reference is not in the sense of

ownership of the Church, but in the sense of its existence or operation within the period.

The Church of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is connected to the election of Israel because, the Church belongs to Jesus Christ, and Christ is the descendant of Israel who has come to reconcile the world with God, and give the world salvation and the blessings of Abraham. The Church therefore becomes connected to Israel's election, as the election in Christ who owes the Church is the perpetuation of Israel's election.

## **6.2 Israel's Election and its Continuity in Christ**

According to Derek Wood (1980), the New Testament announces the extension of God's covenant – promises to the Gentile world and the transference of covenant privileges from the linear seed of Abraham to a predominantly Gentile body (Matt. 21:43) consisting of all who had become Abraham's true seed and God's true Israel through faith in Christ. (Rom. 4:9-15; 9:6; Gal 3:14f, 29; 6:16; Eph.2:11f; 3:6-8). The unbelieving natural branches were broken off from God's olive tree (the elect community sprung from the patriarchs) and wild olive branches (believing gentiles) were grafted in their place (Rom 11:16-24). Faithless Israel was rejected and judged, and the international Christian Church took Israel's

place as God's chosen nation living in the world as His people and worshipping and proclaiming Him as their God (Wood, 136).

Wood further said that, the New Testament presents the idea of election in the following forms:

- a. Jesus is hailed as God's elect one by the father Himself (Lk 9:35 reading *eklelegemenos*, an echo of Isa 42:11) and probably by John the Baptist (Jn. 1:34, if *eklektos* is the right reading). The sneer of Lk 23:35 shows that the elect one was used as a messianic designation in Christ's day (as it is in the book of Enoch 40:5, 45:3-5 etc.). In 1Pet 2:4, 6 Christ is called God's elect cornerstone. This echoes Isa 28:16 LXX. in reference to Christ, the designation points to the unique and distinctive office with which he is invested and to the peculiar delight which God the father takes in him (J Murray in Bakers Dictionary of Theology 1960 p179).
- b. The adjective 'elect' denotes the Christian community in its character and the chosen people of God in contrast with the rest of mankind. The usage simply echoes the Old Testament. The Church is 'an elect race' (1Pet 2:9 quoting Isa 43:20 cf. 2Jn 1, 13) having the privileges of access to God and the responsibilities of praising and proclaiming him, and faithfully guarding His truth, which Israel and God had before. As in the case of Israel, God had

magnified His mercy by choosing poor and undistinguished persons for His momentous destiny (1Cor 1:27f, Jos 2:5 cf. Deut. 7:7; 9:6) and, as before, God's gracious choice and call had created a people –His people- which had no existence as a people before (1Pet 2:10, Rom 9:25f).

In the Synoptics, Christ refers to the *eklektoi* (pl.) in various eschatological contexts. They are those whom God accepts and will accept, because they have responded to the gospel invitation and come to the wedding feast stripped of self-righteousness and clad in the wedding garment provided by the host i.e. trusting in God's mercy (Mt 22:14). God will vindicate them (Lk 18:7) and keep them through coming tribulations and peril (Mk 13:20) for they are the object of His special care

- c. *Ekleptomai* is used of Christ's choice of His apostles (Lk 6:13; cf. Acts 1:24; 9:15) and the Church's choice of deacons (Acts 6:5) and delegates (Acts 15:22). This is election to special service from among the ranks of the elect community, as in the Old Testament. Christ's cherry-picking of the twelve for apostolic office involved the choosing of them out of the world to enjoy salvation (cf. Jn. 15:16) except in the case of Judas (cf. Jn.13:18).

On election in the NT, Neusner said that, 'the belief that God has elected some also

plays an important role in the New Testament. Jesus Himself, the Son of God is called the Chosen One. “And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, ‘This is my Son, my Chosen, listen to Him’ (Lk. 9:35). Jesus is also called the chosen messiah. “And the people stood beholding. And the rulers also with them derided him saying, He saved others, let him save himself, if He be Christ, the Chosen one of God” (Lk.23:35). And the followers of Jesus are branded as the ones whom God has selected. According to the gospel of John, Jesus Himself called his disciples the chosen ones. Hear Jesus “If ye were of the world, the world would love his own, but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you” (Jn.15:19 KJV). And elsewhere the members of the Church are so addressed “But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood and an holy nation, a peculiar people, that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvellous light” (1 Pet.2:9 KJV). The ones God has chosen will endure the final tribulation (Mat.24:22-245), and ultimately the son of man will come to gather them unto Himself (Mat.24:30-31). Revelation 17:14 also says a similar thing “ these shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them; for He is Lord of lords and King of kings, and they that are with Him are called, and chosen and faithful” (KJV). The best known presentation of election in the New Testament is found in Paul’s epistle to the Romans, chapters 9-11. (Paul treated a similar thing in Romans 8:28-39). There

Paul speaks of the divine election of Jacob (the ancestor of Israel) rather than Esau, defending it as having its own reason in God's plan. He rejects the idea that God has abolished the election of Israel by encompassing His call and grace to new Israelites who believe in Jesus Christ. The tenacity is to cause jealousy among the Jewish nationals so they would rekindle their faith in their God so that they being the original recipients of God's covenant and promises will also be saved and not be missed out. The author of the letter to the Ephesians said God has chosen a believer to holiness, while James noted in his letter that, God has chosen the poor so that they would become rich (187).

### **6.3 Extension of Israel's Election to the Church**

The Church is the body of believers in Christ Jesus. Berkhof rightly defined the Church when he wrote that; Church as a word coming from Hebrew 'qahal or kahal' meaning 'to meet or come together at an appointed place', and from the Greek word 'ekklesia' meaning 'to call out'. And another Greek word that denotes Church is 'sunagoge' which means 'to come or bring together'. Both the Hebrew and Greek meanings show the church as: (a) Persons called out (b) A gathering for religious worship or activities (c) The place of gathering (to Worship Christ): it can be a building, or an open place without a building. (d) The whole body of believers

throughout the world. (e) The temple of the Holy Spirit. (f) The Jerusalem that is above or the New Jerusalem. (Berkhof, 556-558)

It is imperious to note that, everything about the church hinges on Christ. And because Christ is chosen by God, His followers are chosen with Him. Christ Himself said He has chosen His believers; “Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit” (Jn.15:16). And Jesus Christ chose His followers to become heirs with Him.

God’s divine election spans the space of time. God chose from eternity. Dr. J. I. Packer gives a biblical definition of Divine election when he writes: ‘The verb “elect” means to select, or choose out. The biblical doctrine of election is that before the Creation, God selected out of the human race, foreseen as fallen, those whom he would redeem, bring to faith, justify and glorify in and through Jesus Christ. This divine choice is an expression of free and sovereign grace, for it is unconstrained and unconditional, not merited by anything in those who are its subjects. God owes sinners no mercy of any kind, only condemnation; so it is a wonder, and matter of endless praise, that He should choose to save any of us; and doubly so, when His choice involved the giving of His own Son to suffer as sin-bearer for the elect’ (Packer, 125).



We have established that, election means to choose or to select, and from the above it expresses the idea that those who are believers in Christ are so, not by chance, but because God chose them. And when we talk of Divine election we are saying, rather basically, that, God chose a certain group and called them out from the world to be His own special people. God has had this special love relationship with those He has chosen from all eternity, and it is based on that love relationship that He has chosen them for salvation. Why God chose some for salvation and left others in their sinful state is a question, we cannot answer from our finite knowledge. We cannot allege injustice or mistake against God. He is perfect in all His ways. All His actions and attributes are always in harmony with one another and so His sovereign will always work in seamless harmony with His wisdom, justice, goodness, and love. And so election was done in perfect Divine love and counsel and so cannot be faulty nor can be faulted.

Romans 11:16-36 records the illustration of the olive tree. ‘Got Question’ discussed this thus: This passage speaks of Israel the (‘natural’ branches) were broken off from the olive tree, and the Church (‘wild’ branches or shoots) being grafted into the olive tree. Since Israel is referred to as branches, as well as the Church, it stands to reason that, neither group is the “whole tree,” so to speak; rather, the whole tree represents God’s workings with mankind as a whole.

Therefore, God's program with Israel and God's program with the Church are part of the outworking of His purpose among men in general. Of course, this is not intended to mean that either program is of little significance. Many commentators have noted that, more space is given in the Bible regarding God's programs with Israel and with the Church.

### **6.3.1 Election Primarily as Election in Christ**

In Genesis 12, God chose and called Abraham, and promised him that he would be the father of a great nation (Israel or the Jews), the Jews would possess a land, that Israel would be blessed above all other nations, and all other nations would be blessed from Israel. So, God chose Abraham from the beginning and revealed that Israel (Abraham's descendants) would be His chosen people on the earth, and he will bless them, but that His blessings would not be limited to them solely but would be extended to the rest of the nations through them. Galatians 3:14 recognises the nature of the blessings to come to all the other nations: "That the blessings of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." Thus through Jesus Christ the Savior of the world, all the nations of the world became blessed by Israel. And Jesus Christ has become the only name through which all the peoples of the world can approach God. No other name is given to man by which we can be saved.

In Got, it is further stated that, God's plan of redemption is built upon the finished work of Jesus Christ, a descendant of David and Abraham. But Christ's death on the cross is sufficient for the sins of the entire world, not just the Jews! Galatians 3:6-8 states, "Consider Abraham: 'He believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.' Understand, then, that those who believe are children of Abraham. The Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: 'All nations will be blessed through you.'" Finally, Galatians 3:29 say, "If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." In other words, in Christ, believers are counted righteous by faith in the same way that Abraham was (Galatians 3:6-8). If we are in Christ, then we are partakers of the blessing of Israel and all nations in the redemptive work of Christ. Believers become the spiritual descendants of Abraham. Believers do not become physical Jews, but they may enjoy the same type of blessings and privileges as the Jews (Accessed on 28/10/2023). Thus it is in Christ that the Church today is elected to receive the blessings of Abraham, the blessings of salvation.

God's divine election of people for salvation is fulfillment of the promise of salvation revealed in Genesis 3:15, where the woman's seed is to crush the serpent's head. And therefore salvation in this way was not to be limited to one person, family or nation or people, but to apply to all descendants of the woman,

Eve. God in His perfect knowledge and plan, choose Abraham as a man, then his descendants, and the nation of Israel to bring about this salvation to bear on the whole world.

### **6.3.2 The Church as the Object of Election in Christ**

The church as the object of election in Christ is attested to by Christ Himself when He said “I have Chosen You” (Jn. 15:16). Those chosen by Christ are the elect of God. The elect forms the church. Calvin said that, ‘The elect are gathered into Christ’s flock by a call not immediately at birth, and not all at the same time, but according as it pleases God to dispense His grace to them. But before they are gathered unto that supreme Shepherd, they wander scattered in the wilderness common to all; and they do not differ at all from others except that they are protected by God’s special mercy from rushing headlong into the final ruin of death (accessed on 15/01/2024). And Thomas Watson in a similar way addressed Christians saying, “Christians, you who are vessels of election – were by nature as wicked as others – but God had compassion on you and plucked you as brands out of the fire! He stopped you in your course of sinning – when you were marching to hell! He turned you back to Him by sincere repentance. Oh, here is the banner of love displayed over you!”(Accessed from Bible Reasons: why should God let you into heaven? on 22/01/2024).

## **6.4 Responsibilities of the Elect in Christ Today**

Election of Israel placed on them responsibilities as the chosen people of God. The Church, the body of believers and followers of Christ is and are a continuation of the election of Israel, thus placing on them same responsibilities election placed on Israel as the elect nation of God. As earlier stated in chapter five, Israel had the responsibilities of serving God's divine purpose as the window through which to bless the rest of the nations of the world; reflect the character of God; and evangelise the world. Christians as the elect today owe it as responsibility to do the things required of Israel as the new Israel in Christ.

Israel by election became God's beloved; became God's own people; God's special possession; God's sons; God's own belonging: priced higher than all others on the earth. They are to live their lives unto the Lord their God, different from the lives of the rest of the peoples on earth. This is to be so, because they are special as chosen people unto a holy God. Thus in Deut. 14:1ff, Israel is prohibited from certain rites and behaviours. Craigie explained that the principle underlying the registration is stated in the opening words: "you are sons of the Lord your God." Earlier in Deuteronomy, the conception of a father /son relationship between God and Israel has been used to illustrate God's provision and care for His people (Deut.1:31) and the reason underlying His disciplining of them (Deut.8:5). In this

context, the emphasis is on the responsibility that rested upon the Israelites because of their intimate relation to God as “sons.” The prohibition in chapter 13 concerning idolatry had been intended to cut off the possibility of a relationship with any other god. Here it is indicated clearly that their behaviour as sons of God would be distinct from that of those who worshipped other gods. The practices prohibited are those which characterised certain facets of foreign religion (229). The same responsibility rests on the elect today. They are sons of God; God’s special people; His own possession; priced more highly with the precious Blood of Jesus Christ. As such they are to be holy for the one who has elected them (Jn.15:16) is Holy with the Father. The elect are to be different from the rest of the peoples of the earth, for they are sons of God.

The elect today owe it as a duty to serve others, to serve the world. One of the responsibilities of the elect Israel was service to the nations. John wrote: “But whoso hath this world’s good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?” (1 John 3:17). John is making a strong case for the Church in the area of compassion. The elect are living in the 21<sup>st</sup> century which is being tormented by diseases, poverty, pain, and suffering, this presents a good opportunity for the elect to show the grace, compassion and mercy of Jesus Christ and in this way convey God’s favour and

love to the rest of the world. It is the elects' service to others and the society that the world will see God's mercy and grace in action and be drawn to God in faith.

The elect are ambassadors for Christ (2 Cor. 5:20). They have a responsibility to model Christ before the world so that when people see them, they see Christ. The lives of the elect have to be typically different from those of non-elect or non-Christians.

The elect are to be known by their commitment to inner purity, holiness and moral excellence. They are to "be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation (generation), among whom ye shine as lights in the world" (Phil 2:15). Elects of God are expected to show themselves approved by God, to show they are from and belong to God. Their lives must need to show people God's holy nature. Daniel, Joseph, Meshach, Shedrach and Abednego distinguished themselves as elects of God. It is by being different that the elect can lead the unholy world to God.

## **6.5 Implications of Election in Christ on the Church**

The election of Israel by God to be His own special possession comes with both negative and positive consequences. On the side of the positive, Israel was God's cherished people; highly prized. Israel became placed higher than and was better favoured before God among all the nations. Secondly, Israel became a

blessed nation and a window of blessings to the rest of the nations. Thirdly, because Israel was elected, God was defending them and fighting their enemies to fulfil His promise to Abraham “I will bless those who bless you and anyone who curses you I will curse.” Israel was to serve a nation as slaves for four hundred years, but the nation they serve will be punished “but I will bring judgment on the nation which they serve, and afterward they will come out with great possessions” (Gen. 15:14 RSV). God fulfilled His promise by punishing Egypt with ten plagues beginning with ‘Water becomes blood’ and culminating in the ‘death of firstborn’ (Exod.7:14-11:6). And we are told “the Lord had given the people favour in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they let them have what they asked. Thus they despoiled the Egyptians.”(Exod.12:35RSV).

On the negative side, God would continue to show His holy nature even if Israel fails to keep to the covenant obligations, thus His wrath will rise up against them, and punishment would flow to them instead of blessings. Thus when Israel refused to heed to the warnings of the prophets sent by God like Isaiah, Amos, Joel and Jeremiah, God brought the Assyrians who took the upper ten tribes into exile to Assyria. And later, the kingdom of Judah went the same way off to Babylon.

The elect today (i.e. the Church) is not different from the elected Israel; it is the new Israel in Christ. Moses mediated the covenant with Israel; Christ mediated



the new covenant with the whole of mankind. The implications of election on the church today are many folds.

First, the elect are to be holy people to bear and reflect the character of God. God is a Holy God and His people must be holy as He to show their distinctiveness in the world.

Secondly, they are under obligation to serve the nations. Service to the nations has to be the show of love, grace and mercy of Jesus Christ to those who are far off from the light of Jesus salvation. Thus they are to serve as the window through which the love, grace, mercy and favour from God can come to the rest of man.

Thirdly, the elect have to evangelise the rest of the world for Christ. Those who do the work of evangelism or evangelization are called evangelists. It therefore behoves that, all elects are evangelists for Christ. They are expected to fulfil the great commission “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit” (Matt.28:19KJV). And Revelation speaks of the priesthood of all believers (Rev.1:6). It means that all elects are priests who are saddled with the responsibility of teaching the world the Word and ordinances of God.

Fourthly, the elect receive God's favour which also includes protection and fighting for them. Just like He protected and fought for Israel, punishing their enemies like Egypt; Amalek (1Sam.15), Damascus, Gaza, Tyre, Ammon, and Edom (Amos 1:3-15). In the same way God is destined to punish the oppressors of His elect today and comfort them, "when he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne; they cried out with a loud voice, 'o Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before thou wilt judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell upon the earth?'" Then they were each given a white robe and told to rest a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brethren should be complete, who were to be killed as they themselves had been" (Rev. 6:9-11RSV). God is the shield for His elect today and for His elect, the Great I AM is still saying, "I will bless those who bless you and anyone who curses you I will curse."

Fifthly, the elect are chosen for salvation; salvation from sin. It is stated that "Our sin separates us from God. Our sin places us at enmity against God; it is an act of treason. God is a righteous and just judge, and He has declared all of us sinners as guilty of this treason against His Holy Name. Our punishment is a tormented eternity in Hell, separated from God. Christ's sacrifice on the cross is the only possible payment worthy to pay the fine for our crime. He paid the debt owed. By God's grace, we can have saving faith to repent of our sins and turn to

Christ, trusting Him for our salvation” (Bible Reasons). Another implication is that, since God is Holy and has elected people unto holiness, failure to maintain holy living before the Lord is subject to the attraction of the wrath of God. Israel was God’s elected nation but they lapsed into apostasy and God did not spare them. Israel went into exile to Assyria and Judah to Babylon, but this did not do away with the status of being God’s chosen. The elect today also stand the chance of suffering in diverse ways for their sins; and also for the sins in the world hence they are here, but this does not take away their status as elects of God.

## **6.6 If God has elected, why evangelise?**

Chukwuemeka, Emilio Castro and Gerhard Linn, Gava basically agree that, Evangelism is the presentation of Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit so that others may come to put their trust in God through Him, accepting him as their Saviour and serving him as their Lord. To Chukwuemeka and Gava, the word comes from the Greek noun euangelion which means gospel or good news. The verb form of the word is euangelizes that which means to preach the gospel or to tell good news. A related Greek word is marturein which means to bear witness.

Evangelism is the queen of all Christian ministries. It is the highest calling of the Christian community because the community itself is borne of evangelism and exists to evangelize.

Evangelism is the major tool in the spread of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Throughout His earthly ministry, He preached the gospel of the kingdom and left His disciples to continue with the work of spreading the good news of salvation. He left the disciples with the final instruction: they were by his authority to make more disciples; to baptize them in the name of the trinity and teach the new converts to obey Christ; and He would be with them at all times (Matt. 28:19-20). This is a mandate given to the elect in Jesus by Jesus himself. The elect are under obligation to fulfil the mandate given to them by God to evangelise the nations. Gava noted that, “the early fathers’ evangelism was effective and powerful just like nowadays. Meanwhile let us utilise today’s technological gadgets and appliances which the early fathers could not have access to, to make the gospel more effective and effectual than expected.” In Bible Reasons the question is asked and answered thus: If God chooses who will go to heaven, and it is totally His doing, what is the point in evangelism? We go out and evangelize, first and foremost, because we are commanded to by Christ. Secondly, we do not know when in a person’s life God has predestined for him to come to repentance and place his trust in Christ. God

uses His people for His purposes – even to such purposes as bringing His lost sheep home.

From all that is said above, the elect are to carry out or we have to do evangelism to obey Jesus Order and to fulfil the mandate given to us as seen in the passage in Matthew 28:16-20 “Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. And when they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age.” Being with us to the close of time implies His Spiritual presence to lead, direct, protect, make our work fruitful and to also assess the work we do for Him and the Father. This assurance should ginger the elect to evangelise against all odds, because the owner of the work is still in the work overseeing what is been done and giving it meaning. He has not retired and so the workers should also not retire to rest. All that is needed for the work is being provided since the Master of the work is in the work; God is still working and so should His elect. Election and salvation in Jesus Christ is a very interesting topic that can never be bored out, and so we have to keep the flag flying high so that the world can come to the saving knowledge of Christ. The Message of divine

unconditional blessings and salvation is a must be preached and must be heard message; the honeyed message that all peoples of the world should receive with gladness. Let me conclude with what Charles Spurgeon once said, quoted on Bible Reasons, “Whatever may be said about the doctrine of election, it is written in the Word of God as with an iron pen, and there is no getting rid of it. To me, it is one of the sweetest and most blessed truths in the whole of revelation, and those who are afraid of it are so because they do not understand it. If they could but know that the Lord had chosen them, it would make their hearts dance for joy.” And if one gets the joy in being saved, then the joy should be spread so that others can also benefit by coming to the salvation in Christ, and this can only be done on the human level through evangelism.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **7.1 Introduction**

The concluding chapter dwells on the summary of the research topic: The Election of Israel in the context of Deuteronomy 14:2: The study of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Church. The chapter draws a conclusion and ends with a couple of recommendations.

#### **7.2 Summary**

This research work considered the election of Israel and how this election has spawned history into the present age. The problem for the study was the misunderstanding some people have as regards God's election of Israel and His relationship with the Jewish nation; and the misconception as to the connection between the election of Israel and the election in Christ of believers today; the election of Israel had implications for the nation and also placed on Israel responsibilities; the election in Christ also has implications and places on the elect today responsibilities as well. This knowledge is lacking even among some Christians and the study has tried to throw light. To do this, relevant literature that dwells on election of Israel, the Church of the 21<sup>st</sup> century was reviewed. And a summary of the review was finally made. A historical study was done to bring to

light an understanding of the subject of the study. Library research was employed for the main sources; and internet materials were also accessed for the sources of data for the work. We understand that, Election is one of the major topics in both the secular world and in Christendom. Much has been written or said about it, but much is still to be understood about it. Election in the secular is a term that frequents the mouths of people all over the world. People understand election as the act of making choice, as we choose leaders every day to take up leadership roles in our associations, local and international organizations, family formations, local government areas, states and nations. In these elections, persons elected are saddled with responsibilities which they carry out for the people who choose them and for their organizations, states or nations. Election as is understood and used in Christian circles has to do with God's relationship and dealings with man. Election is that free choice of God which precedes any choice of man. Election is that divine will of God to choose individuals or groups for His special, specific purposes. It is a Biblical doctrine which teaches that, God from time to time chose individuals out of His free will and divine counsel to special and specific tasks. He chose Noah when He brought the flood upon the earth to make the ark through which He saved remnants of the creatures for posterity and continuity. He chose Moses to use him to bring out Israel from slavery. He chose Aaron and his descendants to be priests and a priestly family; He chose Eli and Samuel to be



priests and others; He chose Saul, David, Solomon, Jehu, Hazael, Cyrus and others for kingship; Elijah, Elisha, Amos, Jeremiah, Isaiah and others were chosen by God to the prophetic ministry; John the baptizer was chosen before birth to be Christ's forerunner; the list is endless. He chose Abraham Terah and made his descendants into a great nation- Israel; And He chose this nation from Abraham to be His own special possession among all the other peoples of the world. Thus Israel became God's own special nation and people over and against the rest of the nations and peoples of the world. The peak of all of God's election is the election of the Saviour Jesus Christ as the chosen One of God through whom from eternity God chose people who He would save from eternal damnation. This work discusses all of these stage by stage. The election of Israel started with God's unconditional, unmerited choice of Abraham. He was called from Ur of the Chaldees where he was serving gods. He was promised blessings of children, family and great nation; he was promised a land - the land of his sojourns the land of Canaan; and he was promised blessings, to be source of blessings to the world and protection. Abraham believed God in order to receive these blessings by faith. The election continued in the family line of Abraham through Isaac; and then Jacob; culminating in the nation of Israel to become God's own special cherished possession. We understand that Israel was chosen for special purpose of service to God and the rest of the nations; she was chosen to be a reflection of God's

character to the world; she was to receive salvation; and Israel was to be the window of God's blessings and favour to the nations of the world. Election placed on Israel the responsibilities of projecting the sovereignty and holiness of God. Israel is expected to show the world that their God is the only sovereign God and is absolutely holy in all things. Thus Israel is to evangelise the world and show them God so that the rest of the peoples of the earth can come to the knowledge of God in faith and so enter into God's favour and blessings. They were chosen to glorify God in all they do. They were to trust God and have faith in who He is, what He is and what He does. The elect in Christ today are the new Israel and so have the same responsibilities placed on them by being God's chosen people. They owe it as a duty to evangelise the rest of mankind to fulfil their election mandate so as to show God to the nations and bring the nations to salvation in Christ in faith; and to enjoy favours and blessings from God

### **7.3 Conclusion**

Election of Israel and the election in Christ should not be seen as two different elections that have no link, but be seen as one. God chose Abraham to prepare a nation through whom Jesus Christ the Saviour of man would emanate. And election is out of God's sovereign will and counsel; man has nothing to boast of for his being chosen; It is purely out of God' unconditional, unmerited love. Man is to accept the divine love and will of God in faith through Jesus Christ.

“Election is the root of all blessings, the spring of every mercy that the soul receives. If election be taken away, everything is taken away.” (Pink)

God out of His love and will chose His people, and He has every right to do so as our Creator. Election reveals His glory and His justice. We need to accept His sovereign will and praise God for His mercy and love.

#### **7.4 Recommendations**

God’s choice of who He has chosen and who He has left out rests with His divine will. His will determines who He has chosen from eternity unconditionally. Election places responsibilities on the elect, yesterday’s Israel and the new Israel in Christ.

Based on the above, the researcher makes the following recommendations.

- (1) Man is to appreciate God for what He has done and is doing.
- (2) The Church (the chosen in Christ) must learn to relate with God and trust in Him through Jesus Christ in faith.
- (3) Election Responsibilities must be carried out faithfully: the elect must reflect God’s character in holiness; and unite to evangelise to fulfil the divine mandate taking advantage of present technologies.

(4) The Church must continue to teach, preach and vehemently reject heretical teachings such as Arminianism and other false teachings concerning election and other Christian doctrines.

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