

The Sovereignty of God

By Arthur Pink

The Sovereignty of God in REPROBATION

"Behold therefore, the *goodness* and the *severity* of God." Romans. 11:22

In the last chapter when treating of the Sovereignty of God the *Father* in Salvation, we examined seven passages which represent Him as making a choice from among the children of men, and predestinating certain ones to be conformed to the image of His Son. The thoughtful reader will naturally ask, "*And what of those who were not ordained to eternal life?*" The answer which is usually returned to this question, even by those who profess to believe *what the Scriptures teach concerning God's sovereignty, is, that God passes by the non-elect, leaves them alone to go their own way, and in the end casts them into the Lake of Fire because they refused His way, and rejected the Savior of His providing.* But this is only a *part* of the truth; the other part--that which is most offensive to the carnal mind--is either ignored or denied.

In view of the great solemnity of the subject here before us, in view of the fact that today almost all--even those who profess to be Calvinists--reject and repudiate this doctrine, and in view of the fact that this is one of the points in our book which is calculated to raise the most controversy, we feel that an extended enquiry into this aspect of God's Truth is demanded. That this branch of the subject of God's sovereignty is profoundly mysterious we freely allow--yet, that is no reason why we should reject it. The trouble is that, nowadays, there are so many who receive the testimony of God--only so far as they can satisfactorily account for all the reasons and grounds of His conduct, which means they will accept nothing but that which can be measured in the petty scales of their own limited capacities!

Stating it in its baldest form, the point now to be considered is, *Has God fore-ordained certain ones to damnation?* That many will be eternally damned is clear from Scripture; that each one will be judged according to his works and reap as he has sown, and that in consequence his "damnation is just" (Romans 3:8), is equally sure; and that God decreed that the non-elect should choose the course they follow--we now undertake to prove.

From what has been before us in the previous chapter concerning the *election* of *some* to salvation, it would unavoidably follow, even if Scripture had been silent upon it, that there must be a *rejection* of others. Every choice, evidently and necessarily implies a refusal, for where there is no leaving out--there can be no choice. If there are some whom God has *elected* unto salvation (2 Thess. 2:13), there must be others who are *not elected* unto salvation. If there are some that the Father gave to Christ (John 6:37), there must be others whom He did not give unto Christ. If there are some whose names are written in the Lamb's book of Life (Revelation 21:27), there must be others whose names are not written there. That this is the case we shall fully prove below.

Now all will acknowledge that from the foundation of the world, God certainly fore-knew and fore-saw who would and who would not receive Christ as their Savior, therefore *in giving being and birth to those He knew would reject Christ, He*

necessarily created them unto damnation. All that can be said in reply to this is, No--while God did *foreknow* these ones would reject Christ--yet He did not *decree* that they should. But this is a begging of the real question at issue. God had a definite reason why He created men, a specific purpose why He created this and that individual, and in view of the eternal destination of His creatures, He purposed either that this one should spend eternity in Heaven--or that this one should spend eternity in the Lake of Fire! If then He foresaw that in creating a certain person, that that person would despise and reject the Savior--yet knowing this beforehand He, nevertheless, brought that person into existence, then it is clear He designed and ordained that that person should be eternally lost.

Again--*faith* is God's gift, and the purpose to give it only to some, involves the purpose not to give it to others. Without faith there is no salvation, "He who believes not shall be damned." Hence if there were some of Adam's descendants to whom He purposed *not* to give faith, it must be because He ordained that they should be damned.

Not only is there no escape from these conclusions--but history confirms them. Before the Divine Incarnation, for almost two thousand years, the vast majority of mankind were left destitute of even the external means of grace, being favored with no preaching of God's Word and with no written revelation of His will. For many long centuries Israel was the only nation to whom the Deity vouchsafed any special discovery of Himself, "Who in times past allowed all nations to walk in their own ways" (Acts 14:16), "You only (Israel) have I known of all the families of the earth" (Amos 3:2). Consequently, as all other nations were deprived of the preaching of God's Word, they were strangers to the faith that comes thereby (Romans 10:17). These nations were not only ignorant of God Himself--but of the way to please Him, of the true manner of acceptance with Him, and the means of arriving at the everlasting enjoyment of Himself.

Now if God had willed their salvation--would He not have vouchsafed them the *means* of salvation? Would He not have given them all things necessary to that end? But it is an undeniable matter of fact--that He did *not*. If, then, Deity can, consistently, with His justice, mercy, and benevolence, deny to some the means of grace, and shut them up in gross darkness and unbelief (because of the sins of their forefathers, generations before), why should it be deemed incompatible with His perfections to *exclude* some persons, many, from grace itself, and from that eternal life which is connected with it? seeing that He is Lord and sovereign Disposer both of the end to which the means lead, and the means which lead to that end?

Coming down to our own day, and to those in our own country--leaving out the almost innumerable crowds of *unevangelized heathen*--is it not evident that there are many living in lands where the Gospel is preached, lands which are full of churches--who die strangers to God and His holiness? True, the means of grace were close to their hand--but many of them knew it not. Thousands are born into homes where they are taught from infancy to regard all Christians as hypocrites and preachers as arch-humbugs. Others, are instructed from the cradle in Roman Catholicism, and are trained to regard Evangelical Christianity as deadly heresy, and the Bible as a book highly dangerous for them to read! Others, reared in "Christian Science" families, know no more of the true Gospel of Christ than do the unevangelized heathen! The great majority of these, die in utter ignorance of the Way of Peace.

Now are we not obliged to conclude, that it was not God's will to communicate grace to them? Had His will been otherwise, would He not have actually communicated His grace to them? If, then, it was the will of God, in time, to refuse to them His grace--it must have been His will from all eternity, since His will is, as Himself, the same yesterday, and today and forever. Let it not be forgotten that God's *providences* are but the manifestations of His *decrees*. What God does in time--is only what He purposed in eternity--His own will being the sole cause of all His acts and works. Therefore from His actually leaving some men in final impenitency and unbelief--we assuredly gather it was His everlasting determination so to do; and consequently that *He reprobated some* from before the foundation of the world.

In the Westminster Confession it is said, "God from all eternity did by the most wise and holy counsel of His own will, freely and unchangeably foreordain *whatever* comes to pass". The late Mr. F. W. Grant--a most careful and cautious student and writer--commenting on these words said: "It is perfectly, divinely true, that God has ordained for His own glory *whatever* comes to pass." Now if these statements are true, is not the doctrine of *Reprobation* established by them? What, in human history, is the one thing which does come to pass every day? What--but that men and women die, pass out of this world into a hopeless eternity, an eternity of suffering and woe! If then God has foreordained whatever comes to pass--then He must have decreed that vast numbers of human beings should pass out of this world unsaved--to suffer eternally in the Lake of Fire! Admitting the *general premise*, is not the *specific conclusion* inevitable?

In reply to the preceding paragraphs the reader may say--All this is simply reasoning, logical no doubt--but yet mere inferences. Very well, we will now point out that in addition to the above conclusions, there are many passages in Holy Writ, which are most clear and definite in their teaching on this solemn subject; passages which are too plain to be misunderstood and too strong to be evaded. The marvel is that so many good men have denied their undeniable affirmations.

"Joshua waged war against all these kings for a long time. Except for the Hivites living in Gibeon, not one city made a treaty of peace with the Israelites, who took them all in battle. For it was the Lord himself who hardened their hearts to wage war against Israel, so that he might destroy them totally, exterminating them without mercy, as the Lord had commanded Moses." (Joshua 11:18-20). What could be plainer than this? Here was a large number of Canaanites whose hearts the *Lord* hardened, whom He had purposed to utterly destroy, to whom He showed "no favor". Granted that they were wicked, immoral, idolatrous; were they any worse than the immoral, idolatrous cannibals of the South Sea Islands (and many other places), to whom God gave the Gospel through John G. Paton! Assuredly not! Then why did not Jehovah command Israel to teach the Canaanites His laws and instruct them concerning sacrifices to the true God? Plainly, because *He had marked them out for destruction*, and if so, that from all eternity.

"The Lord works out everything for His own ends--even the wicked for a *day of disaster*." (Proverbs 16:4). That the Lord made all people--every reader of this book will allow. That He made all for His own ends--is not so widely believed. That God made us, not for our own sakes--but for Himself; not for our own happiness--but for His glory; is, nevertheless, repeatedly affirmed in Scripture, Revelation 4:11. But Proverbs 16:4 goes even farther: it expressly declares that the Lord made the *wicked* for the *day of disaster*: that was His design in giving them being. But why? Does not

Romans 9:17 tell us, "For the Scripture says unto Pharaoh, Even for this purpose have I raised you up, that I might show My power in you, and that My name might be declared throughout all the earth!" God has made the wicked that, at the end, He may demonstrate "His power" --demonstrate it by showing what an easy matter it is for Him to subdue the stoutest rebel, and to overthrow His mightiest enemy.

"And then will I profess unto them--I never knew you! Depart from Me, you who work iniquity" (Matthew 7:23). In the previous chapter it has been shown that, the words "know" and "foreknowledge" when applied to God in the Scriptures, have reference not simply to His prescience (that is His bare knowledge beforehand), but to His *knowledge of approbation*. When God said to Israel, "You only have I *known* of all the families of the earth" (Amos 3:2), it is evident that He meant, "You only had I any *favorable regard* to." When we read in Romans 11:2 "God has not cast away His people (Israel) whom He *foreknew*," it is obvious that what was signified is, "God has not finally rejected that people whom He has *chosen as the objects of His love*. cf. Deuteronomy 7:7, 8. In the same way (and it is the only possible way) are we to understand Matthew 7:23. In the Day of Judgment the Lord will say unto many, "I *never knew* you". Note, it is more than simply "I know you not". His solemn declaration will be, "I *never knew* you"--you were never the objects of My approbation. Contrast this with "I know (love) My sheep, and am known (loved) of Mine" (John 10:14). The "sheep", His elect, the "few", He does "know"; but the reprobate, the non-elect, the "many" He knows not--no, not even before the foundation of the world did He know them--He "NEVER" knew them!

In Romans 9 the doctrine of God's sovereignty in its application to both the elect and the reprobate is treated of at length. A detailed exposition of this important chapter would be beyond our present scope; all that we can essay is to dwell upon the part of it which most clearly bears upon the aspect of the subject which we are now considering.

Verse 17: "For the Scripture says unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised you up, that I might show My power in you, and that My name might be declared throughout all the earth." These words refer us back to verses 13 and 14. In verse 13 God's love to Jacob and His hatred to Esau are declared. In verse 14 it is asked "Is there unrighteousness with God?" and here in verse 17 the apostle continues his reply to the objection.

We cannot do better now than quote from Calvin's comments upon this verse. "There are here two things to be considered--the predestination of Pharaoh to ruin, which is to be referred to the past and yet the hidden counsel of God--and then, the design of this, which was to make known the name of God. As many interpreters, striving to modify this passage, pervert it, we must first observe, that for the word 'I have raised you up', or stirred up, in the Hebrew is, 'I have appointed', by which it appears, that God, designing to show that the contumacy of Pharaoh would not prevent Him to deliver His people, not only affirms that his fury had been foreseen by Him, and that He had prepared means for restraining it--but that He had also thus designedly ordained it and indeed for this end--that he might exhibit a more illustrious evidence of His own power." It will be observed that Calvin gives as the force of the Hebrew word which Paul renders "For this purpose have I raised you up," "I have appointed". As this is the word on which the doctrine and argument of the verse turns we would further point out that in making this quotation from Exodus 9:16 the apostle significantly departs from the Septuagint--the version then in common use, and from

which he most frequently quotes--and substitutes a clause for the first that is given by the Septuagint: instead of "On this account you have been preserved", he gives "For this very end have I raised you up!"

But we must now consider in more detail the case of Pharaoh which sums up in concrete example the great controversy between man and his Maker. "For now I will stretch out My hand, that I may smite you and your people with pestilence; and you shall be cut off from the earth. And in very deed for this cause have I raised you up, for to show in you My power; and that My name may be declared throughout all the earth" (Exodus 9:15, 16). Upon these words we offer the following comments:

First, we know from Exodus 14 and 15 that Pharaoh was "cut off", that he was cut off by God, that he was cut off in the very midst of his wickedness, that he was cut off not by sickness nor by the infirmities which are incident to old age, nor by what men term an accident--but cut off by the immediate hand of God in judgment.

Second, it is clear that God raised up Pharaoh for this very end--to "cut him off," which in the language of the New Testament means "destroyed." God never does anything without a previous design. In giving him being, in preserving him through infancy and childhood, in raising him to the throne of Egypt, God had one end in view. That such was God's purpose is clear from His words to Moses before he went down to Egypt, to demand of Pharaoh that Jehovah's people should be allowed to go a three days' journey into the wilderness to worship Him, "And the Lord said unto Moses, When you go to return into Egypt, see that you do all these wonders before Pharaoh, which I have put in your hand--but I will harden his heart, that he shall not let the people go" (Exodus 4:21). But not only so, God's design and purpose was declared long before this. Four hundred years previously God had said to Abraham, "Know of a surety that your seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; and also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge" (Genesis 15:13, 14). From these words it is evident (a nation and its king being looked at as one in the O. T.) that God's purpose was formed long before He gave Pharaoh being.

Third, an examination of God's dealings with Pharaoh makes it clear that Egypt's king was indeed a "vessel of wrath fitted to destruction." Placed on Egypt's throne, with the reins of government in his hands, he sat as head of the nation which occupied the first rank among the peoples of the world. There was no other monarch on earth able to control or dictate to Pharaoh. To such a dizzy height did God raise this reprobate, and such a course was a natural and necessary step to prepare him for his final fate, for it is a Divine axiom that "pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall." Further--and this is deeply important to note and highly significant--God removed from Pharaoh the one outward restraint which was calculated to act as a check upon him. The bestowing upon Pharaoh of the unlimited powers of a king was setting him above all legal influence and control. But besides this, God removed Moses from his presence and kingdom. Had Moses, who not only was skilled in all the wisdom of the Egyptians but also had been reared in Pharaoh's household, been suffered to remain in close proximity to the throne, there can be no doubt but that his example and influence had been a powerful check upon the king's wickedness and tyranny. This, though not the only cause, was plainly one reason why God sent Moses into Midian, for it was during his absence that Egypt's inhuman king framed his most cruel edicts. God designed, by removing this restraint, to give Pharaoh full

opportunity to fill up the full measure of his sins, and ripen himself for his fully-deserved but predestined ruin.

Fourth, God "hardened" his heart as He declared He would (Exodus 4:21). This is in full accord with the declarations of Holy Scripture, "The preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, is from the Lord" (Proverbs 16:1); "The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water, He turns it wherever He will" (Proverbs 21:1). Like all other kings, Pharaoh's heart was in the hand of the Lord; and God had both the right and the power to turn it wherever He pleased. And it pleased Him to turn it against all good. God determined to hinder Pharaoh from granting his request through Moses to let Israel go, until He had fully prepared him for his final overthrow, and because nothing short of this would fully fit him, God hardened his heart.

Finally, it is worthy of careful consideration to note how the vindication of God in His dealings with Pharaoh has been fully attested. Most remarkable it is to discover that we have Pharaoh's own testimony in favor of God and against himself! In Exodus 9:15 and 16 we learn how God had told Pharaoh for what purpose He had raised him up, and in verse 27 of the same chapter we are told that Pharaoh said, "I have sinned this time: the Lord is righteous, and I and my people are wicked." Mark that this was said by Pharaoh after he knew that God had raised him up in order to "cut him off", after his severe judgments had been sent upon him, after he had hardened his own heart. By this time Pharaoh was fairly ripened for judgment, and fully prepared to decide whether God had injured him, or whether he had sought to injure God; and he fully acknowledges that he had "sinned" and that God was "righteous". Again; we have the witness of Moses who was fully acquainted with God's conduct toward Pharaoh. He had heard at the beginning what was God's design in connection with Pharaoh; he had witnessed God's dealings with him; he had observed his "long-sufferance" toward this vessel of wrath fitted to destruction; and at last he had beheld him cut off in Divine judgment at the Red Sea. How then was Moses impressed?

Does he raise the cry of injustice? Does he dare to charge God with unrighteousness? Far from it. Instead, he says, "Who is like unto You, O Lord, among the gods? "Who is like You, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders!" (Exodus 15:11).

Was Moses moved by a vindictive spirit as he saw Israel's arch-enemy "cut off" by the waters of the Red Sea? Surely not. But to remove forever all doubt upon this score, it remains to be pointed out how that saints in heaven, after they have witnessed the sore judgments of God, join in singing "the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb saying, Great and marvelous are Your works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are Your ways, You King of Nations" (Revelation 15:3). Here then is the climax, and the full and final vindication of God's dealings with Pharaoh. Saints in heaven join in singing the Song of Moses, in which that servant of God celebrated Jehovah's praise in overthrowing Pharaoh and his hosts, declaring that in so acting God was not unrighteous but just and true. We must believe, therefore, that the Judge of all the earth did right in creating and destroying this vessel of wrath, Pharaoh.

The case of Pharaoh establishes the principle and illustrates the doctrine of *Reprobation*. If God actually reprobated *Pharaoh*, we may justly conclude that *He reprobates all others whom He did not predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son*. This inference the apostle Paul manifestly draws from the fate of Pharaoh,

for in Romans 9, after referring to God's purpose in raising up Pharaoh, he continues, "therefore". The case of Pharaoh is introduced to prove the doctrine of Reprobation as the counterpart of the doctrine of Election.

In conclusion, we would say that in forming Pharaoh, God displayed neither justice nor injustice--but only His bare sovereignty. As the potter is sovereign in forming vessels, so God is sovereign in forming moral agents.

Verse 18: "Therefore has He mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will He hardens". The "therefore" announces the general conclusion which the apostle draws from all he had said in the three preceding verses in denying that God was unrighteous in loving Jacob and hating Esau, and specifically it applies the principle exemplified in God's dealings with Pharaoh. It traces everything back to the sovereign will of the Creator. He loves one and hates another, He exercises mercy toward some and hardens others, without reference to anything--except His own sovereign will.

That which is most repellant to the carnal mind in the above verse is the reference to hardening, "Whom He will--He hardens", and it is just here that so many commentators and expositors have adulterated the truth. The most common view is that the apostle is speaking of nothing more than judicial hardening, that is, a forsaking by God because these subjects of His displeasure had first rejected His truth and forsaken Him. Those who contend for this interpretation appeal to such scriptures as Romans 1:19-26, "God gave them up", that is (see context) those who "knew God" yet glorified Him not as God (v. 21). Appeal is also made to 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12. But it is to be noted that the word "harden" does not occur in either of these passages. But further. We submit that Romans 9:18 has no reference whatever to judicial "hardening". The apostle is not there speaking of those who had already turned their backs on God's truth--but instead, he is dealing with God's sovereignty, God's sovereignty as seen not only in showing mercy to whom He wills--but also in hardening whom He pleases. The exact words are "Whom He will"--not "all who have rejected His truth", "He hardens", and this, coming immediately after the mention of Pharaoh, clearly fixes their meaning. The case of Pharaoh is plain enough, though man by his glosses has done his best to hide the truth.

Verse 18: "Therefore has He mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will He hardens". This affirmation of God's sovereign "hardening" of sinners' hearts--in contradistinction from judicial hardening--is not alone. Mark the language of John 12:37-40, "But though He had done so many miracles before them--yet they believed not on Him: that the saying of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spoke, Lord, who has believed our report? and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? Therefore they could not believe (why?), because that Isaiah said again, He has blinded their eyes, and hardened their hearts (why? Because they had refused to believe on Christ? This is the popular belief--but mark the answer of Scripture) that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them." Now, reader, it is just a question as to whether or not you will believe what God has revealed in His Word. It is not a matter of prolonged searching or profound study--but a childlike spirit which is needed, in order to understand this doctrine.

Verse 19: "You will say then unto me, Why does He yet find fault? For who has resisted His will?" Is not this the very objection which is urged today? The force of the apostle's questions here seems to be this: Since everything is dependent on God's

will, which is irreversible, and since this will of God, according to which He can do everything as sovereign--since He can have mercy on whom He wills to have mercy, and can refuse mercy and inflict punishment on whom He chooses to do so--why does He not will to have mercy on all, so as to make them obedient, and thus put finding of fault out of court? Now it should be particularly noted that the apostle does not repudiate the ground on which the objection rests. He does not say God does not find fault. Nor does he say, Men may resist His will. Furthermore; he does not explain away the objection by saying: You have altogether misapprehended my meaning when I said 'Whom He wills He treats kindly, and whom He wills He treats severely'. But he says, "first, this is an objection you have no right to make; and then, This is an objection you have no reason to make" (vide Dr. Brown). The objection was utterly inadmissible, for it was a replying against God. It was to complain about, argue against, what God had done!

Verse 19: "You will say then unto me, Why does He yet find fault? For who has resisted His will?" The language which the apostle here puts into the mouth of the objector is so plain and pointed, that misunderstanding ought to be impossible. Why does He yet find fault? Now, reader, what can these words mean? Formulate your own reply before considering ours. Can the force of the apostle's question be any other than this: If it is true that God has "mercy" on whom He wills, and also "hardens" whom He wills, then what becomes of human responsibility? In such a case men are nothing better than puppets, and if this be true then it would be unjust for God to "find fault" with His helpless creatures. Mark the word "then"--You will say then unto me--he states the (false) inference or conclusion which the objector draws from what the apostle had been saying. And mark, my reader, the apostle readily saw the doctrine he had formulated would raise this very objection, and unless what we have written throughout this book provokes, in some at least, (all whose carnal minds are not subdued by divine grace) the same objection, then it must be either because we have not presented the doctrine which is set forth in Romans 9, or else because human nature has changed since the apostle's day.

Consider now the remainder of the verse (19). The apostle repeats the same objection in a slightly different form--repeats it so that his meaning may not be misunderstood--namely, "For who has resisted His will?" It is clear then that the subject under immediate discussion relates to God's "will", that is, His sovereign ways, which confirms what we have said above upon verses 17 and 18, where we contended that it is not judicial hardening which is in view (that is, hardening because of previous rejection of the truth)--but sovereign "hardening", that is, the "hardening" of a fallen and sinful creature for no other reason than that which inheres in the sovereign will of God. And hence the question, "Who has resisted His will?" What then does the apostle say in reply to these objections?

Verse 20: "Nay but, O man, who are you that replies against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why have you made me thus?" The apostle, then, did not say the objection was pointless and groundless, instead, he rebukes the objector for his impiety. He reminds him that he is merely a "man", a creature, and that as such it is most unseemly and impertinent for him to "reply (argue, or reason) against God". Furthermore, he reminds him that he is nothing more than a "thing formed", and therefore, it is madness and blasphemy to rise up against the Former Himself. Before leaving this verse it should be pointed out that its closing words, "Why have you made me thus" help us to determine, unmistakably, the precise subject under discussion. In the light of the immediate context what can be the force

of the "thus"? What--but as in the case of Esau, why have you made me an object of "hatred"? What--but as in the case of Pharaoh, Why have you made me simply to "harden" me? What other meaning can, fairly, be assigned to it?

It is highly important to keep clearly before us that the apostle's object throughout this passage is to treat of God's sovereignty in dealing with, on the one hand, those whom He loves--vessels unto honor and vessels of mercy, and also, on the other hand, with those whom He "hates" and "hardens"--vessels unto dishonor and vessels of wrath.

Verses 21-23: "Has not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump, to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor? What if God, willing to show 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." In these verses the apostle furnishes a full and final reply to the objections raised in verse 19. First, he asks, "Has not the potter power over the clay?" etc. It is to be noted the word here translated "power" is a different one in the Greek from the one rendered "power" in verse 22 where it can only signify His might; but here in verse 21, the "power" spoken of must refer to the Creator's rights or sovereign prerogatives; that this is so, appears from the fact that the same Greek word is employed in John 1:12, "As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God"--which, as is well known, means the right or privilege to become the sons of God. The R. 5. employs "right" both in John 1:12 and Romans 9:21.

Verse 21: "Has not the potter power over the clay of the same lump, to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor?" That the "potter" here is God Himself is certain from the previous verse, where the apostle asks "Who are you that replies against God?" and then, speaking in the terms of the figure he was about to use, continues, "Shall the thing formed say to Him that formed it" etc. Some there are who would rob these words of their force by arguing that while the human potter makes certain vessels to be used for less honorable purposes than others, nevertheless, they are designed to fill some useful place. But the apostle does not here say, Has not the potter power over the clay of the same lump, to make one vessel unto an honorable use and another to a less honorable use--but he speaks of some "vessels" being made "unto dishonor". It is true, of course, that God's wisdom will yet be fully vindicated, inasmuch as the destruction of the reprobate will promote His glory--in what way the next verse tells us.

Before passing to the next verse let us summarize the teaching of this and the two previous ones. In verse 19 two questions are asked, "You will say then unto me, Why does He yet find fault? For who has resisted His will?" To those questions a threefold answer is returned. First, in verse 20 the apostle denies the creature the right to sit in judgment upon the ways of the Creator, "Nay but, O man who are you that replies against God? Shall the thing formed say to Him that formed it, Why have You made me thus?" The apostle insists that the rectitude of God's will must not be questioned. Whatever He does must be right. Second, in verse 21 the apostle declares that the Creator has the right to dispose of His creatures as He sees fit, "Has not the Potter power over the clay, of the same lump, to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor?" It should be carefully noted that the word for "power" here is *exousia*--an entirely different word from the one translated "power" in the following verse ("to make known His power"), where it is *dunaton*. In the words "Has not the

Potter power over the clay?" it must be God's power justly exercised, which is in view--the exercise of God's rights consistently with His justice--because the mere assertion of His omnipotency would be no such answer as God would return to the questions asked in verse 19. Third, in verses 22, 23, the apostle gives the reasons why God proceeds differently with one of His creatures from another: on the one hand, it is to "show His wrath" and to "make His power known"; on the other hand, it is to "make known the riches of His glory."

"Has not the potter power over the clay of the same lump, to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor?" Certainly God has the right to do this because He is the Creator. Does He exercise this right? Yes, as verses 13 and 17 clearly show us, "For this same purpose have I raised you (Pharaoh) up".

Verse 22: "What if God, willing to show His wrath, and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction". Here the apostle tells us in the second place, why God acts thus, that is, differently with different ones--having mercy on some and hardening others, making one vessel "unto honor" and another "unto dishonor". Observe, that here in verse 22 the apostle first mentions "vessels of wrath", before he refers in verse 23 to the "vessels of mercy". Why is this? The answer to this question is of first importance: we reply, Because it is the "vessels of wrath" who are the subjects in view before the objector in verse 19. Two reasons are given why God makes some "vessels unto dishonor": first, to "show His wrath", and secondly "to make His power known"--both of which were exemplified in the case of Pharaoh.

One point in the above verse requires separate consideration, "Vessels of wrath fitted to destruction". The usual explanation which is given of these words, is that the vessels of wrath *fit themselves* to destruction, that is, fit themselves by virtue of their wickedness; and it is argued that there is no need for God to "fit them to destruction", because they are already fitted by their own depravity, and that this must be the real meaning of this expression. Now if by "destruction" we understand punishment, it is perfectly true that the non-elect do "fit themselves", for everyone will be judged "according to his works"; and further, we freely grant that subjectively the non-elect do fit themselves for destruction. But the point to be decided is, Is this what the apostle is here referring to? And, without hesitation, we reply it is not. Go back to verses 11-13: did Esau fit himself to be an object of God's hatred, or was he not such before he was born? Again; did Pharaoh fit himself for destruction, or did not God harden his heart before the plagues were sent upon Egypt?--see Exodus 4:21!

Romans 9:22 is clearly a continuation in thought of verse 21, and verse 21 is part of the apostle's reply to the questions raised in verse 20: therefore, to fairly follow out the figure, it must be God Himself who "fits" unto destruction the vessels of wrath. Should it be asked how God does this, the answer, necessarily, is, objectively--He fits the non-elect unto destruction by His fore-ordinating decrees. Should it be asked why God does this, the answer must be, To promote His own glory, that is, the glory of His justice, power and wrath. "The sum of the apostle's answer here is, that the grand object of God, both in the election and the reprobation of men, is that which is paramount to all things else in the creation of men, namely, His own glory" (Robert Haldane).

Verse 23: "And that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had afore prepared unto glory." The only point in this verse which

demands attention is the fact that the "vessels of mercy" are here said to be "afore prepared unto glory". Many have pointed out that the previous verse does not say the vessels of wrath were afore prepared unto destruction, and from this omission they have concluded that we must understand the reference there to the non-elect fitting themselves in time, rather than God ordaining them for destruction from all eternity. But this conclusion by no means follows. We need to look back to verse 21 and note the figure which is there employed. "Clay" is inanimate matter, corrupt, decomposed, and therefore a fit substance to represent fallen humanity. As then the apostle is contemplating God's sovereign dealings with humanity in view of the Fall, He does not say the vessels of wrath were "afore" prepared unto destruction, for the obvious and sufficient reason that, it was not until after the Fall that they became (in themselves) what is here symbolized by the "clay". All that is necessary to refute the erroneous conclusion referred to above, is to point out that what is said of the vessels of wrath is not that they are fit for destruction (which is the word that would have been used if the reference had been to them fitting themselves by their own wickedness)--but fitted to destruction; which, in the light of the whole context, must mean a sovereign ordination to destruction by the Creator.

We quote here the pointed words of Calvin on this passage, "There are vessels prepared for destruction, that is, given up and appointed to destruction; they are also vessels of wrath, that is, made and formed for this end, that they may 'be examples of God's vengeance and displeasure.' Though in the second clause the apostle asserts more expressly, that it is God who prepared the elect for glory, as he had simply said before that the reprobate are vessels prepared for destruction, there is yet no doubt but that the preparation of both is connected with the secret counsel of God. Paul might have otherwise said, that the reprobate gave up or cast themselves into destruction--but he intimates here, that before they are born they are destined to their lot". With this we are in hearty accord. Romans 9:22 does not say the vessels of wrath fitted themselves, nor does it say they are fit for destruction, instead, it declares they are "fitted to destruction", and the context shows plainly it is God who thus "fits" them--objectively by His eternal decrees.

Though Romans 9 contains the fullest setting forth of the doctrine of Reprobation, there are still other passages which refer to it, one or two more of which we will now briefly notice:

"What then? That which Israel seeks for, that he obtained not--but the election obtained it, and the rest were hardened" (Romans 11:7). Here we have two distinct and clearly defined classes which are set in sharp antithesis: the "election" and "the rest"; the one "obtained", the other is "hardened". On this verse we quote from the comments of John Bunyan of immortal memory:, "These are solemn words: they sever between men and men--the election and the rest, the chosen and the left, the embraced and the refused. By 'rest' here must needs be understood those not elect, because set the one in opposition to the other, and if not elect, whom then but reprobate?"

Writing to the saints at Thessalonica the apostle declared "For God has not appointed us to wrath--but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thess. 5:9). Now surely it is patent to any impartial mind, that this statement is quite pointless if God has not "appointed" any to wrath. To say that God "has not appointed *us* to wrath", clearly implies that there are some whom He has "appointed to wrath", and were it

not that the minds of so many professing Christians are so blinded by prejudice, they could not fail to clearly see this.

"A Stone of stumbling, and a Rock or offence, even to them who stumble at the Word, being disobedient, whereunto also they were appointed" (1 Peter 2:8). The "whereunto" manifestly points back to the stumbling at the Word, and their disobedience. Here, then, God expressly affirms that there are some who have been "appointed" (it is the same Greek word as in 1 Thess. 5:9) unto disobedience. Our business is not to reason about it--but to bow to Holy Scripture. Our first duty is not to understand--but to believe what God has said.

"But these, as natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed, speak evil of the things that they understand not; and shall utterly perish in their own corruption" (2 Peter 2:12). Here, again, every effort is made to escape the plain teaching of this solemn passage. We are told that it is the "brute beasts" who are "made to be taken and destroyed", and not the persons here likened to them. All that is needed to refute such sophistry is to inquire wherein lies the point of analogy between the "these" (men) and the "brute beasts"? What is the force of the "as"--but "these as brute beasts"? Clearly, it is that "these" men as brute beasts, are the ones who, like animals, are "made to be taken and destroyed": the closing words confirming this by reiterating the same sentiment, "and shall utterly perish in their own corruption."

"For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation; ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ" (Jude 4). Attempts have been made to escape the obvious force of this verse by substituting a different translation. The R.V. gives: "But there are certain men crept in secretly, even they who were of old written of beforehand unto this condemnation." But this altered rendering by no means gets rid of that which is so distasteful to our sensibilities. The question arises, Where were these "of old written of beforehand"? Certainly not in the Old Testament, for nowhere is there any reference there to wicked men creeping into Christian assemblies. If "written of" be the best translation of "prographo", the reference can only be to the book of the Divine decrees. So whichever alternative be selected there can be no evading the fact that certain men are "before of old" marked out by God "unto condemnation."

"And all that dwell on the earth shall worship him (namely, the Antichrist), everyone whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the Book of Life of the Lamb that has been slain" (Revelation 13:8, R. 5. compare Revelation 17:8). Here, then, is a positive statement affirming that there are those whose names were not written in the Book of Life. Because of this they shall render allegiance to and bow down before the Antichrist.

Here, then, are no less than ten passages which most plainly imply or expressly teach the fact of *reprobation*. They affirm that the wicked are made for the Day of Evil; that God fashions some vessels unto dishonor; and by His eternal decree (objectively) fits them unto destruction; that they are like brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed, being of old ordained unto this condemnation. Therefore in the face of these scriptures we unhesitatingly affirm (after nearly twenty years careful and prayerful study of the subject) that the Word of God unquestionably teaches both Election and Reprobation, or to use the words of Calvin, "*Eternal Election is God's predestination of some to salvation, and others to destruction*".

Having thus stated the doctrine of Reprobation, as it is presented in Holy Writ, let us now mention one or two important considerations to guard it against abuse and prevent the reader from making any unwarranted deductions--

First, the doctrine of Reprobation does not mean that God purposed to take *innocent* creatures, make them wicked, and then damn them. Scripture says, "God has made man upright--but they have sought out many inventions" (Eccl. 7:29). God has not created sinful creatures in order to destroy them, for God is not to be charged with the sin of His creatures. The *responsibility* and *criminality* is man's.

God's decree of Reprobation contemplated Adam's race as fallen, sinful, corrupt, guilty. From it God purposed to save a few as the monuments of His sovereign grace; the others He determined to destroy as the exemplification of His justice and severity. In determining to destroy these others, God did them no wrong. They had already fallen in Adam, their legal representative; they are therefore born with a sinful nature, and in their sins He leaves them. Nor can they complain. This is as they wish; they have no desire for holiness; they love darkness rather than light. Where, then, is there any injustice if God "gives them up to their own hearts' lusts" (Psalm 81:12)!

Second, the doctrine of Reprobation does not mean that God refuses to save those who earnestly seek salvation. The fact is that the reprobate have no longing for the Savior--they see in Him no beauty in Him, that they should desire Him. They will not come to Christ--why then should God force them to? He turns away none who do come--where then is the injustice of God fore-determining their just doom? None will be punished but for their iniquities; where then, is the supposed tyrannical cruelty of the Divine procedure? Remember that God is the Creator of the wicked, not of their wickedness; He is the Author of their being--but not the Infuser of their sin.

God does not (as we have been slanderously reported to affirm) compel the wicked to sin, as the rider spurs on an unwilling horse. God only says in effect that solemn word, "Let them alone!" (Matthew 15:14). He needs only to slacken the reins of providential restraint, and withhold the influence of saving grace, and apostate man will only too soon and too surely, of his own accord, fall by his iniquities. Thus the decree of reprobation neither interferes with the bent of man's own fallen nature, nor serves to render him the less inexcusable.

Third, the decree of Reprobation in no manner conflicts with God's goodness. Though the non-elect are not the objects of His goodness in the same way or to the same extent as the elect are--yet are they not wholly excluded from a participation of it. They enjoy the good things of Providence (temporal blessings) in common with God's own children, and very often to a higher degree. But how do they improve them? Does the (temporal) goodness of God lead them to repent? Nay, truly, they do but "despise His goodness, and forbearance, and longsuffering, and after their hardness and impenitency of heart *treasure up* unto themselves wrath against the day of wrath" (Romans 2:4, 5). On what righteous ground, then, can they murmur against not being the objects of His benevolence in the endless ages yet to come? Moreover, if it did not clash with God's mercy and kindness to leave the entire body of the *fallen angels* (2 Peter 2:4) under the guilt of their apostasy; still less can it clash with the Divine perfections to leave some of *fallen mankind* in their sins and punish them for them.

Finally, let us interpose this necessary caution: It is utterly impossible for any of us, during the present life, to ascertain who are among the reprobate. We must not *now* so judge any man, no matter how wicked he may be. The vilest sinner, may, for all we know, be included in the election of grace--and be one day quickened by the Spirit of grace! Our marching orders are plain, and woe be unto us if we disregard them, "Preach the Gospel to *every* creature!" When we have done so, our skirts are clear. If men refuse to heed, their blood is on their own heads; nevertheless "For we are to God the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. To the one we are the smell unto death; to the other, the fragrance unto life" (2 Corinthians 2:15, 16).

We must now consider a number of passages which are often quoted with the purpose of showing that God has *not* fitted certain vessels to destruction or ordained certain ones to condemnation.

First, we cite Ezekiel 18:31, "Why will you die, O house of Israel?" On this passage we cannot do better than quote from the comments of Augustas Toplady: "This is a passage very frequently--but very idly, insisted upon by Arminians, as if it were a hammer which would at one stroke crush the whole fabric to powder. But it so happens that the "death" here alluded to is neither spiritual nor eternal death: as is abundantly evident from the whole tenor of the chapter. The death intended by the prophet is a political death; a death of national prosperity, tranquility, and security. The sense of the question is precisely this: What is it that makes you in love with captivity, banishment, and civil ruin? Abstinence from the worship of images might, as a people, exempt you from these calamities, and once more render you a respectable nation. Are the miseries of public devastation so alluring as to attract your determined pursuit? Why will you die? die as the house of Israel, and considered as a political body? Thus did the prophet argue the case, at the same time adding, "For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dies says the Lord God, wherefore, turn yourselves, and live you." This imports: First, the national captivity of the Jews added nothing to the happiness of God. Second, if the Jews turned from idolatry, and flung away their images, they should not die in a foreign, hostile country--but live peaceably in their own land and enjoy their liberties as an independent people." To the above we may add: political death must be what is in view in Ezekiel 18:31, 32 for the simple but sufficient reason that they were already spiritually dead!

Matthew 25:41 is often quoted to show that God has not fitted certain vessels to destruction, "Depart from Me, you cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the Devil and his angels." This is, in fact, one of the principal verses relied upon to disprove the doctrine of Reprobation. But we submit that the emphatic word here is not "for" but "Devil." This verse (see context) sets forth the severity of the judgment which awaits the lost. In other words, the above Scripture expresses the awfulness of the everlasting fire rather than the subjects of it--if the fire be "prepared for the Devil and his angels" then how intolerable it will be! If the place of eternal torment into which the damned shall be cast is the same as that in which God's arch-enemy will suffer, how dreadful must that place be!

Again--if God has chosen only certain ones to salvation, why are we told that God "now commands *all men* everywhere to repent" (Acts 17:30)? That God commands "all men" to repent is but the enforcing of His righteous claims as the moral Governor of the world. How could He do less, seeing that all men everywhere have sinned against Him? Furthermore; that God commands all men everywhere to repent argues

the universality of creature responsibility. But this Scripture does not declare that it is God's pleasure to "give repentance" (Acts 5:31) to all men everywhere. That the apostle Paul did not believe that God gave repentance to every soul is clear from his words in 2 Timothy 2:25, "In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God perhaps will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth."

Again, we are asked, if God has "ordained" only certain ones unto eternal life, then why do we read that He "will have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:4)? The reply is, that the words "all" and "all men", like the term "world," are often used in a general and relative sense. Let the reader carefully examine the following passages: Mark 1:5; John 6:45; 8:2; Acts 21:28; 22:15; 2 Corinthians 3:2 etc., and he will find full proof of our assertion. 1 Timothy 2:4 cannot teach that God wills the salvation of all mankind, or otherwise all mankind would be saved, "What His soul desires even that He does" (Job 23:13)!

Again; we are asked, Does not Scripture declare, again and again, that God is no "respector of persons"? We answer, it certainly does, and God's electing grace proves it. The seven sons of Jesse, though older and physically superior to David, are passed by, while the young shepherd-boy is exalted to Israel's throne. The scribes and lawyers pass unnoticed, and ignorant fishermen are chosen to be the apostles of the Lamb. Divine truth is hidden from the wise and prudent and is revealed to babes instead. The great majority of the wise and noble are ignored, while the weak, the base, the despised, are called and saved. Harlots and publicans are sweetly compelled to come in to the gospel feast, while self-righteous Pharisees are suffered to perish in their immaculate morality. Truly, God is "no respector" of persons or He would not have saved me.

That the Doctrine of Reprobation is a "hard saying" to the carnal mind is readily acknowledged. Yet, is it any "harder" than that of eternal punishment? That it is clearly taught in Scripture we have sought to demonstrate, and it is not for us to pick and choose from the truths revealed in God's Word. Let those who are inclined to receive those doctrines which commend themselves to their judgment, and who reject those which they cannot fully understand, remember those scathing words of our Lord's, "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken" (Luke 24:25): fools because slow of *heart*; slow of heart, not dull of *head*!

Once more we would avail ourselves of the language of Calvin: "But, as I have hitherto only recited such things as are delivered without any obscurity or ambiguity in the Scriptures, let persons who hesitate not to brand with ignominy those Oracles of heaven, beware what kind of opposition they make. For, if they pretend ignorance, with a desire to be commended for their modesty, what greater instance of pride can be conceived, than to oppose one little word to the authority of God! as, 'It appears otherwise to me,' or 'I would rather not meddle with this subject.' But if they openly censure, what will they gain by their puny attempts against heaven? Their petulance, indeed, is no novelty; for in all ages there have been impious and profane men, who have virulently opposed this doctrine. But they shall feel the truth of what the Spirit long ago declared by the mouth of David, that God 'is clear when He judges' (Psalm 51 :4). David obliquely hints at the madness of men who display such excessive presumption amidst their insignificance, as not only to dispute against God--but to arrogate to themselves the power of condemning Him. In the meantime, he briefly suggests, that God is unaffected by all the blasphemies which they discharge against heaven--but that He dissipates the mists of calumny, and illustriously displays His

righteousness; our faith, also, being founded on the Divine Word, and therefore, superior to all the world, from its exaltation looks down with contempt upon those mists" (John Calvin).

In closing this chapter we propose to quote from the writings of some of the standard theologians since the days of the Reformation, not that we would buttress our own statements by an appeal to *human authority*, however venerable or ancient--but in order to show that what we have advanced in these pages is no novelty of the twentieth century, no heresy of the 'latter days' but, instead, a doctrine which has been definitely formulated and commonly taught by many of the most pious and scholarly students of Holy Writ.

"Predestination we call the decree of God, by which He has determined in Himself, what He would have to become of every individual of mankind. For they are not all created with a similar destiny--but eternal life is foreordained for some, and eternal damnation for others. Every man, therefore, being created for one or the other of these ends, we say, he is predestined either to life or to death." From John Calvin's "Institutes".

We ask our readers to mark well the above language. A perusal of it should show that what the present writer has advanced in this chapter is not "Hyper-Calvinism" but real Calvinism, pure and simple. Our purpose in making this remark is to show that those who, not acquainted with Calvin's writings, in their ignorance condemn as ultra-Calvinism that which is simply a reiteration of what Calvin himself taught--a reiteration because that prince of theologians as well as his humble debtor have both found this doctrine in the Word of God itself.

Martin Luther in his most excellent work "Free-will a Slave", wrote: "All things whatever arise from, and depend upon, the Divine appointments, whereby it was preordained who should receive the Word of Life, and who should disbelieve it; who should be delivered from their sins, and who should be hardened in them; who should be justified and who should be condemned. This is the very truth which destroys the doctrine of *free-will* from its foundations, to wit, that God's eternal love of some men and hatred of others--is immutable and cannot be reversed."

John Fox, whose Book of Martyrs was once the best known work in the English language (alas that it is not so today, when Roman Catholicism is sweeping upon us like a great destructive tidal wave!), wrote: "Predestination is the eternal decreement of God, purposed before in Himself, what should befall all men, either to salvation, or damnation".

The "Larger Westminster Catechism" (1688)--adopted by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church--declares, "God, by an eternal and immutable decree, out of His mere love, for the praise of His glorious grace, to be manifested in due time, has elected some angels to glory, and in Christ has chosen some men to eternal life, and the means thereof; and also, according to His sovereign power, and the unsearchable counsel of His own will (whereby He extends or withholds favor as He pleases), has passed by, and fore-ordained the rest to dishonor and wrath, to be for their sin inflicted, to the praise of the glory of His justice".

John Bunyan, author of "The Pilgrim's Progress," wrote a whole volume on "Reprobation". From it we make one brief extract:, "Reprobation is before the person comes into the world, or has done good or evil. This is evidenced by Romans 9:11.

Here you find two in their mother's womb, and both receiving their destiny, not only before they had done good or evil--but before they were in a capacity to do it, they being yet unborn. Their destiny, I say, the one unto, the other not unto eternal life; the one elect, the other reprobate; the one chosen, the other refused". In his "Sighs from Hell", John Bunyan also wrote: "Those who continue to reject and slight the Word of God are such, for the most part, as are ordained to be damned".

Commenting upon Romans 9:22, "What if God willing to show His wrath, and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction" Jonathan Edwards (Vol. 4, p. 306--1743 A.D.) says, "How solemn does the majesty of God appear in the dreadfulness of His anger! This we may learn to be one end of the damnation of the wicked."

Augustus Toplady, author of "Rock of Ages" and other sublime hymns, wrote: "God, from all eternity decreed to leave some of Adam's fallen posterity in their sins, and to exclude them from the participation of Christ and His benefits". And again; "We, with the Scriptures, assert: That there is a predestination of some particular persons to eternal life, for the praise of the glory of Divine grace; and also a predestination of other particular persons to eternal death for the glory of Divine justice--which death of punishment they shall inevitably undergo, and that justly, on account of their sins!"

George Whitefield, that stalwart of the eighteenth century, used by God in blessing to so many, wrote: "Without doubt, the doctrine of election and reprobation must stand or fall together. . . . I frankly acknowledge I believe the doctrine of Reprobation, that God intends to give saving grace, through Jesus Christ, only to a certain number; and that the rest of mankind, after the fall of Adam, being justly left of God to continue in sin, will at last suffer that eternal death which is its proper wages."

"Fitted to destruction" (Romans 9:22). After declaring this phrase admits of two interpretations, Dr. Hodge, perhaps the best known and most widely read commentator on Romans--says, "The other interpretation assumes that the reference is to God and that the Greek word for 'fitted' has its full participle force; prepared (by God) for destruction."

Were it necessary we are prepared to give quotations from the writings of Wycliffe, Huss, Ridley, Hooper, Cranmer, Ussher, John Trapp, Thomas Goodwin, Thomas Manton, John Owen, Witsius, John Gill (predecessor of Spurgeon), and a host of others. We mention this simply to show that many of the most eminent saints in bygone days, the men most widely used of God, held and taught this doctrine which is so bitterly hated in these last days, when men will no longer "endure sound doctrine"; hated by men of lofty pretensions--but who, notwithstanding their boasted orthodoxy and much advertised piety, are not worthy to unfasten the shoes of these faithful and fearless servants of God of other days.

"Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How unsearchable His judgments and untraceable His ways! For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been His counselor? Or who has ever first given to Him, and has to be repaid? For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever! Amen!" (Romans 11:33-36)