

relationship. Thus in this view three steps may be distinguished: (1) God decided to bestow His love upon certain fallen men; (2) God foreknew those particular men with the knowledge of personal relationship; (3) God predetermined what He would do for and to those particular men whom He thus foreknew.

However, a difficulty seems to arise in connection with 1 Peter 1:1-2, where Peter writes to those who are "elect ones (ἐκλεκτοῖς), according to foreknowledge (πρόγνωσιν) of God the Father. . ." Here foreknowledge appears to precede election. But how does this order comport with this view's understanding of Romans 8:29? Perhaps Peter is saying that those upon whom God had decided to bestow His love (thereby foreknowing them), He chose to salvation (thereby electing them). This verse would then not conflict with Romans 8:29 if the following order of steps were adopted:

- (1) God decided to bestow His love upon certain fallen men (assumed in both verses in this view's understanding of foreknowledge in this special usage).
- (2) God thus foreknew those particular men with the knowledge of personal relationship (both verses).
- (3) God elected these very men to salvation (1 Peter 1:1-2).
- (4) God predetermined what He would do for and to these men thus foreknown and elected (Romans 8:29).

(2) A second problem that arises upon the adoption of View #2 is that of God's knowing persons who did not as yet exist. That is, we have clear scriptural evidence for the idea of God's knowing existing persons with the knowledge of personal relationship. But these persons were all living at the time God is said to have known them. Against View #2 it is objected that God cannot bestow special love upon or be personally related to as yet nonexistent persons. (How can you love someone who doesn't exist?)

In reply to this objection it is urged that Romans 9:11-13 seems to say that such a thing is possible. Before Jacob and Esau were born, God chose Jacob as Abraham's spiritual descendant. This choice (made before Jacob existed) is described in this passage in terms of God's bestowing His love upon Jacob, as follows: "for though the twins were not yet born, and had not done anything good or bad, in order that God's purpose according to His choice might stand, not because of works, but because of Him who calls, it was said to her [Rebekah], 'The older will serve the younger.' Just as it is written, 'Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.'" In addition to this passage, Jer. 1:5 and 31:3 are urged. Jer. 1:5 states, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I have appointed you a prophet to the nations." Jer. 31:3 states, "The Lord appeared to me from afar, saying, 'I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have drawn you with lovingkindness.'" To the proponents of this view, these verses (and some other considerations) answer the objection that God cannot know or bestow special love upon persons who only potentially exist.