


Book Review: Traditional Theology as Dogmatics Vol 1. Predestination, Election and Eternal Security

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**Book Details:****Author:** Prince Emma Peters**Publisher:** Lambert Academic Publishing**Year of Publication:** 2020**Pages:** 205**Review**

Prince Emma Peters, a Nigerian theologian, has given his readers a good discussion on three important doctrines that have perplexed the Christian faithful and theologians over many centuries. The issues of predestination, election and its corresponding divine security, in Christian understanding, have no agreed definition(s). This book does not claim to provide all the needed definitions and understanding of these doctrines. After all, the author acknowledges the perplexing nature of these doctrinal issues to the point of admitting that the more he researched on them, the more perplexing and wider his answers became (p.9). Thus, what the author's perspective to these issues did was not to leave us with all the answers to the issues he discussed. As a theologian, I do not think that universally-accepted theological answers could be provided with regard to these doctrinal issues. That notwithstanding, Peters' book ranks as one of the best I have read on these subjects. True to the claim of the author, the book offered a biblically sound interpretation of predestination, election and divine security.

Through a good use of textual, form and narrative criticisms, the author associated predestination and election with God's fore-knowledge and argued that these are not defined by human acts done in the present world. Thus, for the author, predestination and election are not products of human acts but are partly necessitated by God's love. Humans, their acts and yearning for God, are deemed to be consistent with God's nature as their maker according to the book. This then means that both predestination and election are products of God's choice and not a product of favouritism. To further this point, the author searches through Pauline letters to show how predestination and election were products of God's choice. He cites Eph 1:4 as one of the clearest definitions of predestination and election as the product of God's choice. This way, the author stresses that predestination and election are predicated on God's choice done in love even before the creation of the world. This indicates God's universal mercy and willingness to save humans irrespective of the free will he gave them. The book stresses further that such a belief is consistent with the teaching of Jesus in the Johannine Gospel, particularly. It is in this way that eternal security, which is the corollary of divine election, is achieved.

Added to its grounded biblical analysis of related biblical texts, is the author's treatment of these doctrines in a way that leads him back to his traditional Igbo context to either make his points or corroborate what the biblical texts he works with point to. His treatment of issues like sin, destiny and fate, as they relate to predestination and election in Igbo context, is fascinating. This provided a contextual approach to the issues being discussed in the book thereby giving the discussion a contextual relevance which proves that the Igbo society is equally somewhat perplexed with the issues he discussed.

No work of this nature will be error free, either theologically, or grammatically. As such I will point out some flaws of the book. First, the book leaves the place of ethics in understanding predestination and election. This becomes important since the synoptic gospels, particularly that of Matthew, shows the gospel of Jesus in a light that connects ethics to salvation and/or election. This then leads to the question: does it mean that since God's love and mercy are universal, every Christian believer is elected and divinely saved? In fact, it is not clearly discussed in the book the ethical responsibilities of the divinely elected or chosen Christian. Second, the book sometimes appears judgmental. This is seen in the author's opinion that some Christians are useless even to themselves (p.79). I wondered how the author became the sole judge of who is a useless Christian and who is not. Third, the overuse of Latinisms in the book is a little bit worrying, just as the author's capitalisation and italicisation of some English words beg for clarification. Fourth, the many long sentences with which the author writes, makes reading the book somewhat boring. Fifth, the many high-sounding words in the book does not make the piece an easy read for the non-professional in the theological discipline. These, do not in any way, diminish the intellectual impute and standard of the book. To me, the author has written a great book on predestination, election and divine security which is highly recommendable to theologians, students of religious studies and Christians, particularly those in the African context.

Reviewer's Biography

Kingsley Ikechukwu Uwaegbute holds a doctorate degree in New Testament studies from the Department of Religion and Cultural Studies, University of Nigeria, Nsukka where he also teaches. His articles have been published in reputable impact factor journals.