

PREDESTINATION

By

David Bartley, October 14, 1900.

From the SIGNS OF THE TIMES,
November 15, 1900.

Beloved Brethren:- *Predestination* is a prerogative of **all intelligent beings**, and God possesses it *pre-eminently* and *infinitely*, because He is infinite in all His perfections and attributes, while all others are finite and limited. But the Almighty is unlimited. These are primary and self-evident Truths. It would be impious folly in a creature to try to limit the Infinite Creator. Speak we of knowledge, wisdom, counsel, purpose, power, truth, holiness, goodness – God is infinite in all of these, as in all things else. “*God is in one mind, and none can turn Him.*” “*I am the Lord, I change not.*” Immutability belongs to God only. This places Him above and independent of all outside and creature influence and control. God knows no will except His own, and all other wills are subservient to His own. The universal prayer is, “*Thy will be done.*” His will is eternal. Eternity is His. Every event of all time and of infinite eternity as well, is forever present with Him, for He is *Omniscient* and *Omnipresent*; that is, everywhere and always present in all eternity and time, “*beholding the evil and the good.*” No creature or thing or event has ever been concealed in the least from the Omniscient Eyes. These are some of the perfections of the Lord God Almighty. To deny them is to deny that He is God, and to limit the Almighty. Atheists do this; God forbid that any of us should. To us He says, “*Be still, and know that I am GOD.*”

Never having written specially on the **predestination of God**, now I am moved to do so, in humility and reverence, fear and trembling, desiring only His honor and glory, and that His people may love and worship Him.

The accurate Standard Dictionary gives these definitions:

Foreknowledge.- The prescience of God, by which He foresees from all eternity every being that will exist and every event is His history, as well as all other events whatsoever.

Counsel.- Purpose as the result of careful consideration; design; as, God's counsel.

Purpose.- Plan; design; aim; as, the eternal purpose of God.

Decree.- The eternal purpose of God, whereby for His own glory He has foreordained whatsoever comes to pass; any specific purpose embraced in this one.

Foreordain.- To ordain or appoint beforehand; predetermine; predestinate.

Predestination.- The counsel of God concerning fallen men; the ordering of all things beforehand by the Creator; the eternal purpose of God.

All these defined words are Bible terms, and they are thus defined as God has revealed Himself in His Oracles. The definitions show that all these words of Scripture are very closely related in their meaning, so that the definition of one pervades the definition of each of the others, making the foreknowledge, counsel, purpose, decree, foreordination and predestination of God harmonious and inseparable, just as are all His attributes in all His works and ways.

The counsel and purpose of the Lord run parallel with His prescience or foreknowledge, and all these are surely held firmly in His Almighty decree or foreordination or predetermination or control, thereby forever excluding chance from the limitless dominion of God, and subjecting all creatures, things and events to His Omnipotence or power, according to His eternal purpose so to do. The *sovereignty of God* means this, and in this is His sovereign power and control.

If this limitless control and supreme majesty were not His, then chaotic chance would prevail in the universe, and destruction would run riot, defeating God's eternal purpose and overthrowing His universal dominion. To limit the Almighty in the least in His sovereign control over all worlds and beings and things and events according to His eternal purpose, would certainly involve this awful result of ruinous *chance*, and would be equal to saying, "There is no God." For to

the everlasting God belongs infinite wisdom to purpose and determine, and Omnipotent power to overrule and control all things in all His limitless universe. And so the word asks, “*Who saith, and it cometh to pass, when the Lord commandeth it not?*”

What is God’s *predestination of all things*, more than His determinate counsel and foreknowledge as embracing and controlling all things? It means no more than His eternal purpose in all things, and He supremely rules over all things in all His unlimited universe, subjecting all to His almighty control. Were it not so, there could be no security or safety for His people and saints, and no certainty that the worlds should stand and move in their ordained orbits and order, giving fruitful seasons, perpetuating life, health and comfort, for then *chance* would bring anarchy, disruption and utter ruin to all creation.

But now “*the counsel of the Lord standeth, and the purpose of His heart extendeth to all generations, and He is in one mind, and none can turn Him;*” in His eternal mind all things were embraced and perfectly known forever, and no new thought or purpose has ever arisen in His infinite mind. Therefore, all things determined by Him to be as they are in time, were predetermined before time or purposed in eternity. Well, God’s predetermination according to His eternal purpose which He purposed in Himself, as says Paul, is one and the same as His predestination, meaning only that whatever is, the infinite counsel and purpose of the Omniscient and Omnipotent God before determined to let it be so, because His almighty power would overrule and order it all to His eternal glory and the good of all who love Him, and they are “*the called according to His purpose and grace before the world began.*” Otherwise, not the least event could take place at all, because the almighty power of God could and would have prevented it, and He certainly would have done so, unless His wisdom and counsel determined beforehand to let it take place, This is *predestination*.

God either so determined to let all things take place just exactly as they do, or else His knowledge, wisdom, power and control are imperfect and limited, and they take place purely

by *chance*, to the confusion, disappointment and defeat of God. For we cannot for a moment think that the infinitely wise God would let some things take place in which He has no purpose at all nor takes any notice of them, for this again would make them mere *chance* events. The Son of God teaches us that not a sparrow can fall on the ground without the Father, and that the very hairs of our heads are numbered by Him. Thus is shown the Truth that God's wisdom, knowledge and controlling power extends to the smallest things, because the limitless Almighty is Omnipresent: "*For in Him we live, and move, and have our being.*"

God is from eternity to eternity the same, and all things were forever determined and known by Him, as He has abundantly revealed and taught in the word of Truth, even the most wicked deeds which guilty men have committed on earth, the betrayal and murder of the holy Son of God, the lovely Redeemer being the greatest of all evils. He said, "*And truly the Son of man goeth, as IT WAS DETERMINED: but woe unto that man by whom He is betrayed.*" In solemn prayer to God the apostle said, "*For of a Truth against Thy holy child Jesus, whom Thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatsoever Thy hand and Thy counsel determined before to be done.*" This is simply the *predestination or predetermination of God*, His foreordained counsel and purpose, yet it embraced the blackest crime ever perpetuated, and the God-inspired Peter charged it upon those guilty men that they had been His murders, saying, "*Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain.*" He again said, "*But those things, which God before had shewed by the mouth of all His prophets, that Christ should suffer, **He hath fulfilled.***" Yea, Christ Himself said, "*Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory?*" "*Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day.*" His apostles were likewise wickedly persecuted, imprisoned, and put to death, yet God appointed them unto this suffering for the Truth's sake, and Christ foretold them that those things should come upon them, and

that the wicked who killed them should think that they did God service.

But although the Lord has thus spoken of His determinate counsel relative to the wicked, whose murderous wrath He causes to praise Him, restraining and preventing the remainder of their wrath, so that neither Satan nor the murderous sons of Jacob could go no further than to accomplish the holy purpose of God with Job and Joseph, nor the Jews and Gentiles with Jesus, (for they could not break a single bone in His body, but should look on Him whom they had pierced,) yet the depraved reason and carnal mind of finite and sinful man will find fault with God, and dare object to His plainly revealed word of Truth, saying, "*Why doth His yet find fault? For who hath resisted His will?*" Paul's rebuke is, "*Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to Him that formed it, Why hast Thou made me thus?*" This is just what all such objectors mean, and is the substance of all such replies against the sovereignty of God, and this God Himself rebukes man and condemns him.

To the cruel monarch Pharaoh God said, "*Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew My power in thee, and that My name might be declared throughout all the earth.*" His power and name as the God of the whole earth are so declared through His mighty and righteous dealings with the wicked tyrant ruler of the oppressed children of Israel, and their merciful and wonderful deliverance out of Egypt.

In the case of Pharaoh, Joseph's brethren, the betrayers and murderers of Jesus, though God's purpose of wisdom and power, mercy and blessing, was accomplished through their wicked hands and cruel rage, yet He was holy as well as merciful in all His righteous purpose and sovereign power thus fulfilled, and He justly visited His righteous judgments upon those wicked men, for they were most guilty in thus persecuting the righteous Son and chosen people of God. Their rebellious purpose and wicked determination were to overthrow the dominion and defeat the counsel and purpose of God; but vain was their wrath, and righteous were their calamities which He visited upon them through His wise and almighty providence.

The holy Bible history abounds with many such instances, wherein God Himself declared by His inspired prophets the cruel atrocities which individuals and nations should be guilty of, in the execution of His own determined purpose, all of which He would wisely and righteously overrule to His own glory and the good of His people in the end, and for which He would then righteously judge and punish those wicked individuals and cruel nations. The answer of the hated and persecuted Joseph to his guilty and fearing brethren as truly applies to the conduct of all the wicked, saying, "*But as for you, ye thought evil against me; **but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.***" Joseph thus spoke according to the wisdom and mind of the Lord. Finite and sin-blinded man seeth not as God seeth, and hence his judgment and reason are ever at fault, for as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are God's thoughts and ways above and out of the sight of man's thoughts and ways. It would be well for us to read the inspired answer of Elihu to Job, and receive the Truth, wherein he says, "*Shall even he that hateth right govern? And wilt thou condemn Him that is most just? Is it fit to say to a king, Thou are wicked, and to princes, Ye are ungodly? How much less to Him that accepteth not the persons of princes, nor regardeth the rich more than the poor? For they all are the work of His hands. . . . With God is terrible majesty. Touching the Almighty we cannot find Him out: He is excellent in power, and in judgment, and in plenty of justice: He will not afflict. Men do therefore fear Him: He respecteth not any that are wise of heart.*" The Lord also said to Job, "*Wilt thou also disannul My judgment? Wilt thou condemn Me, that thou mayest be righteous? Hast thou an arm like God, or canst thou thunder with a voice like Him? . . . Then will I confess unto thee that thine own right hand can save thee.*" These divine rebukes should correct and humble us in mute abasement of vain self, before the Holy One.

A Scriptural and reverential consideration of all replies against God, who has revealed the Truth that His "*dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom is from generation to generation: and all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and He doeth according to His will in the army of*

heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest Thou?" should cure us of all our sinful replies and complaints against the Almighty, who is infinitely holy.

To what is here written, as plainly declared in the Bible, *perverted natural reason objects*, that it “makes the Almighty the author and doer of all the sin and wickedness of the world,” while it frees guilty men from all accountability and guilt, and makes the holy God unjust in punishing them. This is most monstrous and shocking for a sinful creature to dare say in any case or event against His Holy Creator, and the objector will meet his just rebuke in the answers of Elihu and the Lord to complaining Job. We all have heard such irreverent complaints and criticisms against the sovereignty of God, as revealed in His electing grace and predestinating purpose, all our lives from the self-wise and self-righteous religious world, **but only in these recent fast-times have we been pained with hearing and reading such replies against God from men of our own household**, some of whom outdo the most vehement Arminian objector in replying against God, as holy Paul declares Him in the ninth chapter of Romans, and the Bible in many, many other places. This is truly alarming and afflicting, and it calls for deep humiliation and supplication before the Lord. It has even been tauntingly and mockingly said by “brethren” to brethren, “O you can’t help it, for God predestinated it!” Thus God, as well as His predestination or counsel and purpose are reproached and condemned by such replies, and He is accused of being the abettor of rebellious and guilty men and devils, and those enemies of God and righteousness are excused and justified on the plea that God ordained that the wrath of man should praise Him. The sentence of the Lord against the Satan-possessed Judas meets and condemns **all those God-reviling replies and objections: “And truly the Son of man goeth, as it WAS DETERMINED: BUT WOE UNTO THAT MAN BY WHOM HE IS BETRAYED!”** Shall we therefore reply and say, as some, “Judas was not responsible, for God was the Author of his treachery, because He “**determined**” it? How shocking! When betrayed, and Peter drew his sword to prevent the arrest

of the holy Lamb of God, the obedient Son said, “*Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which My Father giveth Me, shall I not drink it?*” How this should hush all our replies against what God hath determined and ordained before to be done in His sovereign will!

An objection to the unlimited sovereignty of God as embracing all things in His predetermining counsel and eternal purpose is, that this “would make Him the cause or mover and doer of all wickedness,” and therefore responsible for it and its Author. This is based upon the supposition that whatever God has foreordained or predestinated to be, He Himself is the Author and Doer of by His own agency and power. This is certainly a wrong conclusion, because it is not true; as positively proven in the case of the betrayers and murderers of the Son of God, to whom Peter by the Holy Ghost said, “***Ye have taken, and BY WICKED HANDS have crucified and slain.***” Their wicked hearts and carnal minds of enmity against God was the moving cause and impelled them to do this greatest of all crimes, and they were the accountable and guilty authors of it; yet Peter also said to them, “*Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, **ye have taken, and by wicked hands,***” &c. So it is in all other cases, for while the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God is fulfilled in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth, just as He purposed it to be, so that He is never surprised, disappointed, or the least turned or changed, yet God tempteth no man, nor compelleth any one to do wickedly, but man’s own lusts tempt and entice him in all his sinful ways and wicked works.

It was so when “by man sin entered into the world,” and all wickedness and its punishment, suffering and death, as the result or wages of sin. While this is true, it is also true that the eternal purpose, determinate counsel and foreknowledge of the Lord God Omnipotent and Omniscient saw and determined and declared the end from the beginning, saying, “My counsel shall stand, and **I will do all My pleasure.**”

Of Christ and God and as Paul says, “*In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him **who worketh all things after the counsel of***

His own will.” Thus the Spirit of Truth and revelation in Paul connects all things with the counsel and purpose and will of God, who worketh or orderth and controlleth all things, and all this in subservience to the inheritance of His saints in Christ, which they have obtained by His predestination of them thereunto according to His holy purpose. Thus all things are unchangeably foreknown, purposed and controlled in the infinite wisdom and Omnipotent power of the Almighty, whose dominion is over all worlds, beings and things, just because He is GOD, the Omnipresent and Omnipotent One, the Almighty.

In this wonderful Truth, that “*The Lord God omnipotent reigneth,*” is the salvation, preservation and perpetual welfare of all His people, “*who are **kept by the power of God** through faith unto salvation.*” As to the mistaken inference, that whatever God has ordained or predetermined or predestinated, He is the *cause* and *author* or *doer* of and responsible for, the Bible instances above given positively show that it is not so, but that the righteous Judge of all the earth holds the wicked doers of crime as willfully guilty, and punishes them accordingly, notwithstanding they were gathered together with malice of forethought and guilt, “*For to do whatsoever His hand and His counsel determined before to be done.*” These wicked men, not knowing the purpose of God, were not content that others seize and slay Him, but were willing themselves to do what His counsel had before determined to be done, and therein it was their judgment. This is the inspired testimony and divine record that runs through the Oracles of God.

The absolute foreknowledge of God is admitted by all who admit His eternal and immutable attributes or unchangeable perfections, even though they deny that He also foreordained all things, as well as foreknew them. But every objection which is made against the foreordination of God, may with equal force be made against His foreknowledge, for this as certainly establishes all things in the universe as does His predetermination of them. One is as positive and unalterable as the other. All things which God foreknew, cannot be otherwise than as He fore knew them, but must take place

precisely as foreknown. A denial of this, is also a denial of the Omniscience of God, and charges imperfection and ignorance to Him. But no Baptist denies the foreknowledge of God, but all admit that He certainly foreknew all things whatsoever comes to pass. This establishes the certainty of all things with God as absolutely as would His eternal purpose and decree concerning the certainty of their fulfillment. Hence, the objection to the predestination of any wicked thing or act, that it makes the Holy One the author and cause of such predetermined act, will apply as well against His foreknowledge of such act, and charge Him as being the cause and doer of it. But the criticism is not just or true, for the Holy One is not the author or doer of any sin or wickedness, neither is His determinate counsel and foreknowledge causative thereof, and such an inference and imputation is a slander upon the foreknowledge of God as well as upon His foreordination, for they alike make all things certain of fulfillment, just as God determined and foreknew them.

It was foretold and determined that *wicked Judas* should betray the Holy Son of God, yet God Himself neither betrayed His Anointed nor caused Judas to do this great sin. Peter said by inspiration, that God verily foreordained before the foundation of the world that Christ should be slain as a Lamb for the redemption of His people, but so far from God being His slayer or the causative author of this crime of crimes, His persecuted servant, Stephen, boldly said to his own and Christ's wicked murderers, "*Of whom **ye have been the betrayers and murderers,***" for which the fearful judgments and wrath of God fell upon them, both Jews and Romans, to the uttermost, and most righteously too. Psalm 109, foretold the curse placed upon Judas and his orphaned children and parents and grandparents, and the devil's possession of him, moving him to betray the Lord for thirty pieces of silver, and the consequent manner of Judas's death, and the purchase of the potter's field. Yet it has been so often asserted of late that all things which God predestinated or foreordained, (for the two words mean the same) He also either does or causes to be done, and so is (they charge) the author of, that not a few "brethren" have come to believe and accept as true, without

careful Scriptural examination; because the abhorrent saying has become so common now as an issue among Baptists, that if God predestinated all things, then He is the author of all the sinful things in the world; that is, He causes them to be. But if brethren would only consider how irreverent it is to charge sin and wickedness to God, whatever His ordained purpose may be in its extent, and would not be misled by this stale old charge of carnal-minded rationalists or Arminians ever since they thus slanderously reported of Paul, but would reverently "*search the Scriptures,*" to see what the Lord has said, they would learn that it is written concerning very many of the most calamitous events and enormous wickedness of men and nations, that God positively declared and decreed that they should take place, just as He foretold by His prophets, and accordingly the most wicked and ungodly men and nations were raised up and did commit all the great wickedness that God had said they should. Godly and reverent men should be extremely conscious not to ascribe the influence or works of either Satan or men to the Holy God of our salvation. Men alone are wicked enough to the task; but the devils have their purpose in God's dominion as well. Please take the pains to read the sacred history of the Israelites, from Moses to the end of the seventy years' captivity in Babylon, and the books of the prophets, from Isaiah to Daniel, and you will be both instructed and awed at the many mighty events, including many national calamities, wars and the destruction of cities, countries and nations, which God righteously decreed should be, ages before they came to pass, and yet those wicked men and ungodly nations, the enemies of God and righteousness, were the foretold and ordained authors and doers of all those wicked things. They were arrogant, self-willed, implacable, sensual and devilish in their wicked course and works, neither knowing nor fearing God; but His holy counsel and purpose embraced, bounded and controlled all those far-reaching and momentous events, which were to affect unborn generations and coming nations; and thus and in this way the Most High God executed His firm decrees and righteous judgments in punishing the ungodly and wicked, and in chastising, correcting and humbling His own people, that they should

worship and glorify Him as their God and King, their Father Almighty.

Gentle reader, please read now *“The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto Him, to shew unto His servants things which **must** shortly come to pass,”* and you will be impressed with awe and godly fear at the majesty and amazing things which the Almighty therein declares shall be fulfilled, for many of those mighty events are very calamitous, yet He in wisdom and holiness has purposed and ordained them, *“And He sent and signified it by His angel unto His servant John.”* Let us join with the four and twenty elders, and say, *“We give Thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because Thou hast taken to Thee Thy great power, and hast reigned. And the nations were angry, and Thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged and that Thou shouldest give reward unto Thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear Thy name, small and great; and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth.”* **“Alleluia: for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth.** *Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to Him.”* Let us join Isaac Watts on Sovereignty:

“Keep silence, all created things,
And wait your Maker’s nod;
“My soul stands trembling while she sings,
The honors of her God.

Life, death and hell, and worlds unknown,
Hang on His firm decree;
He sits on no precarious throne,
Nor borrows leave to be.”

“Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power: for Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are and were created.” *“Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.”* *“The eternal God is thy [and my] refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.”*

Believing and trusting in the everlasting God and Father Almighty, David Bartley, Crawfordsville, Indiana, October 14, 1900.