

*FATALISM.*  
*By H. M. Curry.*

From my earliest acquaintance with the Old School Baptists I have heard all the Arminian tribes calling them Fatalists, and the doctrine preached by them Fatalism. When an enemy of the truth desires to bring odium upon the doctrine of Predestination, and to calumniate maliciously those who believe in salvation by grace, the choicest word that his vocabulary can afford him is Fatalism. I find of late that some of our brethren have caught this favorite Ashdod word, and wield it with as much enthusiasm, skill and self-satisfaction as the most hot-headed Arminian in his rashest, bitterest and most malicious invectives against the truth. I have never been in favor of striving about words, but I cannot allow this use of the term Fatalism to go unnoticed any longer.

There are no two words in our language more directly opposite in their meaning than Predestination and Fatalism. The one is the strongest antithesis to the other. The most astonishing thing to me is that classical scholars, or even men of general intelligence, would weaken their claim to reputation as scholars and men of intelligence by confounding the meaning of these terms. I shall, for the benefit of the candid reader, endeavor to inquire into the origin, nature and import of the doctrine of Fatalism, and leave each one to draw his own conclusions as to the fairness or the correctness of the use of this term as a calumination of the doctrine of Providence or Predestination.

Fatalism as a doctrine, system of philosophy, or religious belief, originated among those nations of antiquity that knew not God; hence it is of purely heathen origin. The idea of fate must have been evolved in the following manner. Observing men of all nations, and especially the shrewd, intellectual, ever watchful Greeks and Romans, discovered in the vicissitudes of every day life, both of individuals and of nations, things of great import transpire over which kings and sages had no control. They saw plagues, pestilence and famine consume and waste men, as winter cold blights, withers and scatters the leaves of the summer forest;

they saw storms and earthquakes do their work of wholesale destruction, sweeping away men as grasshoppers, and swallowing up cities as ant hills; they saw the weak perish before the strong, as the morning mists melt away before the advancing sun; they saw the overthrow of kingdoms, the downfall of nations, the laying waste of empires. Against all such things they found themselves utterly powerless, and in their helplessness were swept away in the bosom of destruction. In the midst of distress they resorted to their temples, they sacrificed to their gods, they invoked their patron deities, but all in vain; no help came, no deliverance from their dire distresses. Under such circumstances it was perfectly natural for men to conclude that there are either no gods, or that the gods themselves had no power to help and protect them. Some came to the conclusion that there are no gods, and that all events come upon men inevitably by a blind destiny. This is original Fatalism. Others, who could not give up their traditional deities, and the charms of a delusive worship, were driven to the conclusion that there is a power above the gods, to which the gods themselves are subject. This is the secondary phase of original Fatalism. This view was held by many prominent men, among whom was Cicero, who defined fate as the power that the gods themselves are subject to. This last phase of the doctrine of fate developed until finally an imaginary trinity was invented, called by the Latins, Parcae, and by the Greeks, Moirae. This trinity was composed of three women, called by the English reader the Fates, whose names were Clotho, Lachesis and Atropos, and who controlled the destinies of gods and men after the most irregular, vindictive and capricious manner. Shrines were consecrated to them and temples built in their honor in many parts of Greece and Italy. The worship and doctrine of this imaginary female trinity was called Fatalism. Fatalism in its various ramifications formed the prominent feature of all ancient literature except that of the Jews. So clear were this people of the idea of fate that there is no word in the Hebrew corresponding to the fortune or Parcae of the Latin and the Moirae of the Greek. The reason of this is that Moses and the prophets taught them that one supreme God ruled this universe.

In Sophocles and some others of this time the term fate became synonymous with the word chance. At first glance it seems that these two words are directly opposite in meaning; but a little reflection will make it plain that chance and blind destiny are about the same thing after all.

It will now be seen that Fatalism is first the belief that all things come inevitably upon the human race by blind destiny, with no God to send, direct or avert them. Second, the belief that there is a power above the gods to which they themselves are subject. And third, that all things come by pure chance. Now, who ever saw any one purporting to be an Old Baptist who believed any of the foregoing phases of doctrine? Who ever saw an Old Baptist who believed there is no God, and that all things come by a blind and necessary destiny; that all events are fortuitous or by chance? Who ever saw a Baptist, who believed there is a power above the gods, and that Clotho spins the thread of life, Lachesis determines the length, and Atropos with her inevitable shears cuts the thread? Then how silly, foolish and impertinent is this cry of Fatalism in Baptist pulpits and periodicals.

Now, if any one will consider the difference between events coming to pass that God Himself cannot hinder, but on the contrary is bound to permit, suffer or endure, and events coming to pass as He Himself has ordained by His own determinate counsel, such a one can see the difference between Fatalism and Predestination; he can see how ignorant a man must be of the meaning of his own language when he calls a Predestinarian a Fatalist. Strange as it may seem, those very Arminians who are most vociferous in charging Old Baptists with Fatalism are really Fatalists themselves. It is true that they do not think so, but they think that the ground of this charge is far from them; but upon a very slight analysis of their doctrine it will appear most clearly that the sin justly lies at their door. One sentence from their daily teaching will establish the truth of this assertion. Do they not persistently proclaim that men go to hell against the will of God? that God desires all men to be saved and has done all He can to save them, and yet men go to hell? That Christ made a full and

complete atonement for the sins of all the world, and yet men go to perdition? If all this be true what takes men to hell but fate? Is there not some power that God Himself is subject to? I once heard Bishop Wilson, of Baltimore, say that when the will of man makes its choice, that God Himself cannot change it. Bishop Wilson may very justly and correctly be called a Fatalist upon the authority of his own expression. Numerous quotations might be given from representative Arminians of all ages, as well as from the populace, to show the likeness of their doctrine to ancient Fatalism.

Again the Arminian rejects the decree of election on the ground of the certainty of the result decreed, and at the same time admits the foreknowledge of God. Is not the result as certain by foreknowledge as by the decree? There is nothing gained by denying the decree and substituting for it the divine foreknowledge. This denial involves the objector in a greater difficulty than that which he sought to escape, and which he imagined was chargeable upon predestination alone. By rejecting the decree, and admitting the foreknowledge of God, he has shut himself up to the dread alternative of blank Fatalism, which rules God out of the empire of human history, including even the divine redemption. The question which now arises for all Arminians and partial Predestinarians to answer is, as the whole future is known to God, and therefore certain, therefore determined, by whom or by what has it been determined and rendered certain? The objector has ruled God out; let him bring forth his substitute. He has now dethroned the eternal Jehovah, will he leave the throne of the universe vacant, or whom will he place upon it? He here places himself in a dilemma from which he cannot escape. He has on the one hand a vacant throne, and on the other an absolutely certain future. He has to account for a determined future, while his principles will not allow him to admit an intelligent personal determiner. Here it can be easily seen that outside of God's decrees as the determining cause, all must be attributed to the soulless, passionless, unintelligent idol, Fate.

It is not so much the Arminian that I desire to deal with in this article, as those of our own brethren who, when they wish to

dispute the doctrine of predestination, call it Fatalism. It has just been shown that Predestination and Fatalism are terms of directly opposite meaning, and it may now be positively asserted that Predestination is the only thing that can rule Fatalism out of the universe. Wherever Predestination stops fate steps in. There is no place between to be occupied by any other species of events. History is full of instances where the fortune of dynasties, the downfall of nations, the course of empire, depended upon what seemed to be the most trivial matters, mere trifles, which came without the agency of the leading spirits, or even in defiance of their wills. Oliver Cromwell was about to immigrate to this country, when the departure of the ship in which he was expected to sail was hindered. He remained and assumed the leading part in affairs at home. Had he not remained, Charles the First might have retained his head, and Blake certainly would not have laid the foundation of the maritime supremacy in England. The treaty of Utrecht, which materially affected the social and political life of great nations, was occasioned by a quarrel between the Duchess of Marlborough and Queen Anne over a pair of gloves. The difference between one color and another in the livery of horses begat two most inveterate factions in the Roman Empire, the Prosini and the Veneti, which never suspended their hostilities until they ruined that unhappy government.

The negotiations with the Pope for dissolving Henry the Eighth's marriage, which brought on the "Reformation" in England, are said to have been interrupted by the Earl of Wiltshire's little dog biting the Pope's toe as he held it out to be kissed by that ambassador. The Tory ministry, which gave a new shape to all Europe, was brought in by the Duchess of Marlborough spilling a pail of water upon Mrs. Masham's gown. Mohammed, when flying from his enemies, took refuge in a cave, which his pursuers would have entered had they not seen a spiders web over the entrance; but on seeing this they concluded that there was no one within, and passed on. Thus a spider's web changed the history of the world. The turning point at Waterloo, one of the great decisive battles of the world, resulted from the singular circumstances that prevented the arrival of General

Grouchy. The well-planned attack of the Barbarians upon Rome was averted by the cackling of a goose. A series of most trivial events ended in the overthrow of Antony. Louis the Sixth cut his hair and shaved his beard to obey the order of his Bishop. Eleanor his wife found him very ridiculous in this condition, and avenged herself as she thought proper, and Louis obtained a divorce. She then married Count Anjou, who afterward became Henry the Second of England, and thus gave rise to those wars that afterward ravaged France for three hundred years, and cost the French three hundred thousand men. Was the prevention of Cromwell's departure from England a mere fortuitous event, or was it the intervention of an active, working, ruling providence? Did blind destiny spread the spider's web upon Mohammed's cave, or was it provided by God, who works all things after the counsel of His own will? Was the biting of the Pope's toe by the little dog a mere caprice of the Fates, or was it one of all the things that work together for good to them that love God? We must here strike the balance between Fatalism and Predestination. If nothing is predestinated, then all things are by fate. If all things are predestinated, then there is no such thing as fate. If some things are predestinated, and others not, then the government of this universe is divided between God and the Fates. The man who does not believe in predestination at all is in reality a Fatalist. Let him deny it as he may, and reason as he will, there is no other subterfuge for him. The dilemma has but two horns, and one of them he must take. Then just in the proportion that a man divides the affairs of this world between Predestination and that which is not Predestination, just in that proportion that man is a Fatalist. This article is not intended for a defense of the doctrine of Predestination, but is merely meant to submit to the reader a fair presentation of Fatalism, and to show the difference between it and Predestination, and to point out the inconsistency and confusion of those who confound the one with the other. Those of us who insist upon a limited Predestination, and who call our brethren who place no limit upon Gods decrees, Fatalists, are really much nearer the borders of Fatalism than our brethren whom we thus inconsistently stigmatize.

Again, if the term fate by modern usage means unalterable destiny, all Predestinarians, whether contending for limited or unlimited decrees, are alike Fatalists; for they all believe in the fixed destiny of the human race. Then why should the pot call the kettle black?

A minister passed through the churches of my care, railing against Fatalism, as he called it; but many of the brethren could not tell what he was driving at. They had heard Methodists talk that way, but thought rather strange of a Baptist to speak so. At one place his argument was that a certain man who was a member of a church believing the Predestination of all things, was caught in very disorderly conduct, wicked, out breaking conduct; and when brought before the church in discipline, he put them all to silence by gently reminding them that it was all predestinated, and he could not help it; and they could not exclude him for something that, according to their own doctrine, he could not help.

Now, this is very poor argument against Predestination; but I suppose that in the absence of better it is often used. In the first place, I do not believe such a circumstance ever occurred, but that this is a lie concocted by some Arminian three hundred years ago, to bring odium upon the doctrine of grace. In the second place, if such really did occur, the man did not love the doctrine he professed; it was not the doctrine of his heart, but was mere tradition; perhaps not so much as tradition with him. Instead of exposing the doctrine and the church, he exposed his own vile hypocrisy and insincerity in the truth he professed. This is about as pertinent argument against Predestination as the old saying, "If God has ordained me to salvation, I will take my fill of sin, and be saved anyhow," is pertinent as argument against unconditional election. The terms are off the same piece.

Where does Predestination cease to be a wholesome gospel doctrine, and become a baneful Fatalism? Where is there any well defined line setting forth the limits of one and the beginnings of the other? What proportion of the affairs of this world can a man believe is predestinated, and not be a Fatalist? If predestination of

all things is Fatalism, is not predestination of some things some Fatalism? If the whole of anything is poisonous, is not any part of the same thing poisonous? Is it true that a quarter of lamb is wholesome food when only a quarter is taken, but becomes putrid carcass when all the body is taken? Those that call Old School Baptists Fatalists, in order to be consistent with their principles, should call Christ a Fatalist, for He said, "Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?" {Matthew 6:27}. Or when He also said, "Not a sparrow falls to the ground without your heavenly Father." Paul subjects himself to their odium by testifying that he will have mercy on whom he will, and whom he will he hardeneth. {Romans 9}. Peter is also guilty of a like offense against their zeal for God's honor when he said, Herod, and Pilate and the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together against Christ to do whatsoever God's hand and God's counsel determined before to be done. {Acts 4}. Also when he declared that those who stumbled at the stumbling-stone being disobedient, were appointed to it. {1Peter 2:8}. James places himself in the same company when he said, "For ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and to this, or that." Jude identifies himself with the same kind of Fatalists by saying, "There are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation." Jeremiah must also be classed among them, for he said, "I know, O Lord, that the way of man is not in himself, it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." Solomon belongs to the same company, for he has declared that, "That which is to be hath already been, that which hath been is now, and God requireth the past." Upon the same ground these objectors must stigmatize all the divine writers as Fatalists, and call the Bible itself a book of fate. The charge of Fatalism against Predestinarians is no new thing. The Pelagians were loud against Augustine in this charge, the Arminians against Calvin, and all manner of workmongers against men who held the truth in every age.

*H. M. Curry.*