

The Absolute Predestination Of All Things
By Gilbert Beebe
1800-1881

[Note: The following is a combination of four separate articles by Gilbert Beebe, editor of the SIGNS Of The Times paper from 1832-1880. The publisher has edited these in the following manner: They are joined together because they do not replicate thoughts contained in each separately, and by omitting the salutation or query at the beginning. He has separated the articles by placing the publication date at the end of each. It is appropriate to note two things about Elder Beebe: He expressly and repeatedly denied that his views "made God the author of sin," which a fair reading by an enlightened mind can easily ascertain, and he did not use the word "permissive" relative to God's will. —Publisher]

On this important part of the doctrine of Christ, we wish to be well understood, as we consider it a fundamental part of the faith of the Gospel. In the absence of this doctrine we can have no confidence in the predictions of the Word of God. If the prophets spake and wrote of undetermined events, events concerning which the Holy One Himself had not made up His mind, they must have spoken and written with the utmost uncertainty. If it were possible to banish the doctrine of Predestination from the Holy Scriptures, we should not only lose thereby our interest in the ancient predictions of the Old Testament, but we should find it impossible to believe the testimony of the New. What consolation would the exceedingly great and precious promises of the Gospel afford us, if we had reason to believe that God had not yet determined whether they should ever be verified? Again, what confidence could we have in the veracity of God if it were certain that His promises were made without any determination on His part to perform them? Indeed there could be no certainty of a future state without the predestination of such a state. No heaven, no hell, no resurrection of the body, or final judgment. Thus we see to what an awful dilemma we should be driven without this doctrine.

Predestination is the pre-determination of all events that can possibly come to pass. It involves the doctrine of Divine Sovereignty, and exhibits the wisdom and the power of God; the one presents the purpose, the other carries into execution the thing decreed.

Predestination is the result of the counsel of God's own will, originating with

Himself alone. "With whom took He counsel, and who instructed Him &c"(Isaiah 40:14). In the doctrine of Predestination all the Attributes of God shine forth, with dreadful majesty. The entire history of mankind is by Predestination established in the view of God, and the final destiny of all things are held in His Almighty hand.

"There's not a sparrow nor a worm,
But's found in His decree;
He sits on no precarious throne,
Nor borrows leave to be."

We may consider this doctrine first in the economy of salvation, and then in its more general bearings. First, God has chosen, or predestined, His people unto salvation, "through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth" (II Thessalonians 2:13). Agreeable to His own sovereign pleasure as expressed in the above text, He has predestinated them "to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ unto Himself according to the good pleasure of His will" (Ephesians 1:5). He has predestinated them unto eternal life. "As Thou hast given Him power over all flesh that He should give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given Him" (John 17:2). "And as many as were ordained to eternal life believed" (Acts 13:48). He has predestined their calling, conformity to the image of Jesus Christ, their justification and glorification. "For whom He did foreknow He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the First-born among many brethren. Moreover whom He did predestinate them He also called, and whom He called them He also justified, and whom He justified, them He also glorified" (Romans 8:29-30). In short, every thing in relation to His people here and hereafter is so firmly established in the decree of God that no power can prevail against them. "He rideth upon the heavens in their help and in His excellency on the sky. The eternal God is their refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms" (Deuteronomy 33:26, 27). "Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel; according to this time it shall be said of Jacob and of Israel, What hath God wrought?" (Numbers 23:23) "Even the very hairs of your head are all numbered" (Matthew 10:30 & Luke 12:7).

Second, Predestination is not confined to the adorable purpose of Salvation by Grace; but it has a direct bearing on all things. Not a sparrow can be brought to the ground, nor can the troubled ocean dash her foaming waves one inch beyond the limits of God's decrees. "And said, Hitherto shalt thou

come, but no further: and here shall thy proud waves be stayed" (Job 38:11).

If any thing was left upon uncertainties, every thing must have been equally uncertain. If the smallest atom in creation were suffered to fly at random in the full sense of the word, God Himself not knowing where, or when it would alight, it would prove what cannot be proved, viz: that God is deficient in knowledge. The omniscience, and the predestination of God, must stand or fall together; they cannot be separated. We are confident that both exist in glorious harmony in the mind of Him who has "declared the end from the beginning, saying, My counsel shall stand and I will do all My pleasure" (Isaiah 46:10).

The doctrine of Absolute Predestination, when rightly understood, does NOT involve the idea of man's acting involuntarily in sin; nor does it exonerate him from accountability; this may be discovered by noticing the following examples: The crucifixion of Christ, the abduction of Joseph, together with many other circumstances recorded in Holy Writ. "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" (Acts 4:27). "Him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, YE have taken and by wicked hands crucified and slain" (Acts, 2:23).

The brethren of Joseph had no knowledge of the purpose of God when they sold him to go down into Egypt, they meant it for evil, but God ordained it for good. When the Jews persecuted the disciples of our Lord Jesus into strange cities they knew not that God had ordained this very method of sending his "missionaries" [sic] everywhere preaching the Word. And amidst the abounding abominations of the present day, it is our consolation to know that God has ordained: "The wrath of man shall praise Him, the remainder of wrath Thou will restrain" (Psalm 75:10). We need only to understand this precious doctrine, and we shall most assuredly love it. The Christian exults in the thought that death and hell can do no more than what our Father pleases.

We might notice the objections commonly brought against this doctrine, but we shall wait until such objections are presented; and in the mean time earnestly request our brethren to examine the Word of God on this important subject. And that the God of all grace may give us light and wisdom from

above, that in His light we may see light, is our prayer in Jesus' name, to whom be glory, power and dominion, now and forever, Amen.

February 6, 1833

Our Standard Lexicon defines absolute to mean, in its literal, or general sense, free, independent of anything extraneous. 2. Complete in itself; positive, as an absolute declaration. 3. Unconditional, as an absolute promise. 4. Existing independent of another cause, as God is absolute. 5. Unlimited by extraneous power or control; as an absolute government or prince. 6. Not relative, as absolute space. (See Webster's definition). As this word is nowhere used in the Scriptures to qualify the word predestination, we will not contend for it, especially as the word predestination when rightly understood needs no such qualification, as it cannot be otherwise than absolute. We merely use the word absolute to distinguish our views of predestination from those who, while they admit that the term is frequently used in the Scriptures; deny its plain and obvious meaning as though it were only vaguely used by the inspired writers without any positive or unequivocal meaning.

On the signification of the word predestination, it means foreordination by an unchangeable purpose. But the grand question on which we are principally at issue, is, whether the predestination of God extends to the wicked actions of men or devils. We have rejoiced greatly in the firm belief that God's government is universal, that there is not a sparrow or a worm, but is found in His decree. That sin, and death, and hell are under His control, so that "the wrath of man shall praise Him, and the remainder of wrath He will restrain." If the Scriptures do not authorize us so to believe, we know not at what hour we may fall a prey to the unbridled rage of the enemies of God and of His people.

If the divine government of Jehovah only extends to the "good" conduct of His creatures, His government is much more limited in regard to this world, than we had supposed, for He has informed us that there is "none that doeth good; no not one." But that He has set limits to wicked men, we should infer from His declaration, "I have formed the smith that bloweth the coals in the fire, and bringeth forth an instrument for his work; I have created the waster to destroy. No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that riseth against thee in judgment, thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of Me, saith

the Lord" (Isaiah 54:16,17). If God has created the blacksmith, and the waster, to destroy, and so limited their operations that they cannot go beyond His decree, and if this is a part of the heritage of His servants, they cannot yield it up without marring our inheritance. We confess that to us this part of the saints' inheritance is too valuable to be sold for a mess of pottage, as Esau's birthright. Paul has said, that God "worketh all things after the counsel of His own will;" and God has told us, by the mouth of Isaiah, that He has declared the end from the beginning, &c., "saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure: calling a ravenous bird from the east, the man that executeth My counsel from a far country: yea, I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass, I have purposed it, I will also do it." How unmeaning would all this language be to us in the absence of predestination!

The end declared from the beginning, and yet not determined in the mind and purpose of God, how preposterous! We cannot believe that our God would declare a thing beforehand that He was undecided upon, and which might be quite different from what He had declared; and if He has only declared what He had determined on, that is the most "absolute" predestination that we have any knowledge of. This predetermination of events extends throughout all the intervening space, from "the beginning to the end," and consequently embraces "all things." When wicked men conspired against the life and liberty of Joseph, and against the predestination of his and their own destiny, as signified by Joseph's dreams, they intended evil, "but God meant it for good." If God had not previously intended to harden Pharaoh's heart, He would not have told Moses that He would do so. If He had not predestinated that the children of Israel sojourn in a strange land, and be afflicted cruelly by the Egyptians four hundred years, He certainly would not have told Abraham so (Genesis 15: 12-16). Let it be remembered that God told Abram this long before either the children of Israel or the Egyptians, who were to be concerned in it, were born, and the things which the Egyptians were to do to the children of Israel were such, as God told Abram He would judge and punish them for.

The Son of God was delivered into the hands of wicked men, that they should, with wicked hands, do to Him what God's "hand and counsel had before determined to be done." He was, in fact, "delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God."

Paul writes to the Thessalonians concerning the manifestation of that wicked people, whom the Lord would destroy, and says, "God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie, that they all might be damned,

&c (II Thessalonians 2:11). God said by the mouth of Isaiah, that He would "choose their delusions" (Isaiah 66:4). This is solid Bible testimony, and it is what we intend to express by the words absolute predestination. And pray brother, what objections have you to it? Would you wish the right, the power, or the government of God to be circumscribed? Would you wish to restrict His government, and confine His dominion to "good people" and their "good works" and leave the powers of darkness to rage at random, without the restraint of God's predestinating decrees? Are you fearful that this view reflects upon the purity and holiness of God? But why these fears? Are not the inspired Scriptures sufficiently guarded to secure the honor of their supreme Author? If not, all our attempts to supply the supposed deficiency will be as vain, if not as presumptive, as Uzzah's attempt to protect the Ark of God. Because God controls, restrains, overrules and disposes of all beings, and all events, precisely as He eternally designed to do, it does not BY ANY MEANS FOLLOW THAT HE IS THE FOUNTAIN FROM WHENCE IMPURITY PROCEEDS. He is perfectly holy, just and good; but He has all power to set bounds and limits to that which is unholy, unjust, and wicked. If it be admitted that God now has power to restrain the wickedness of men and devils, according to His sovereign pleasure, and that He is immutable, then it follows, that He always had that power. If it is denied that He has that power, where is the safety of His church? Or, if He has now a perfect knowledge of all beings and of all events, then He must always have had that knowledge. It certainly does not become us to say that either His wisdom, holiness, prescience or power, are at fault, that He has allowed His creatures to rebel against His government, when He had power and wisdom enough to have prevented it, if it had been His pleasure so to have done. We do not charge or brethren with attempting to limit Jehovah, or set bounds for Him to be governed by, but we would give and take the admonition, "Be still and know that He is God." If we cannot comprehend Him, it still is our privilege to confide in Him, for He is too wise to err, and too good to do that which is wrong.

We have no disposition to press our views on those who do not understand the Scriptures as we do on every subject. But we wish all our readers to understand that we do as firmly believe, and as greatly rejoice in the doctrine of Predestination, and its extension to everything in heaven, earth and hell, as we do in any other part of divine revelation.

July 1, 1855.

Predestination, as a highly esteemed writer in the Signs once remarked, does not require to be qualified by prefixing to it the word absolute, as the predestination of God must of necessity be absolute in every particular. Jehovah is an absolute God, and all that He purposes or performs must be absolute. There can be no fiction or anything merely nominal with Him. Predestination is destination beforehand, and as nothing can be beforehand, or subsequent with Him, the term as it is used in the Scriptures is used in reference to our finite state, as creatures of time; or rather as creatures of God, but for the present, in the time state of existence. God inhabits eternity, and all things are ever present with Him. The progression of time and development of events can add nothing to His stock of knowledge. We His creatures may and certainly do both live and learn. He has Himself called our attention to the fact that He "has declared the end from the beginning, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure." This declaration of the end from the beginning proves His prescience so conclusively, that but few are so hardened in Infidelity as to openly and in so many words, deny His foreknowledge of all events; for if He were deficient in knowledge He could not with unerring certainty declare the end from the beginning and from ancient times, the things which are yet to transpire. But there are those who, while they admit what is called the foreknowledge of God, deny that His knowledge is based upon His own purpose and determinate counsel. They urge the following objections to predestination.

It, they say, is fatalism, it destroys man's free-agency, and his accountability, and makes God the author of sin; and some there are who go still farther and say if the doctrine of predestination be true, God in predestinating the events in time, etc., has transcended His right and therefore is unjust. Our friends, we think, will agree with us, that it very illy becomes poor sinful dying mortals thus irreverently, not to say blasphemously, to question the eternal right of God to do what seems to Him good, "in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth," or to set up their own standards of justice and denounce their Creator if He does not abide by their decisions. Let all such first meet the searching interrogative of the inspired Apostle, "Hath not the potter power over the clay, to form one a vessel of honor" etc.? The holy prophet of Jehovah, by inspiration, has informed us that God is the potter, and we are the clay. Hence we must acknowledge His eternal right to dispose of all things, all events, and of all worlds according to His own pleasure. Let this be admitted and all murmuring against His predestination will cease.

It is not our purpose to meet the objections urged by men to the doctrine of divine revelation, and by logical argument to put them to silence; nor do we design to attempt to make the doctrine palatable to the natural mind of man which "is enmity against God," for all such attempts are without the least prospects of success. The enmity of the carnal mind is fully demonstrated in the objections which they bring, but we design rather to search out and call attention of our friends to what God has revealed in the Scriptures on the subject, and this we will do, if God permit, whether men will hear, or whether they forbear.

The term predestination, as we have intimated, has reference to the order and succession of events in time, by which the eternal designs of God are brought to pass. And, so far as God's providence is concerned in bringing His designs to pass, predestination simply signifies that God had purposed, decreed, ordained, or destined the accomplishment of those things before they were, in order of time brought to pass. Hence to us, it is pre-destination, with God it is destination, because His infinity connects and comprehends the end with the beginning, for He is Himself the First and the Last, the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the Ending.

Predestination is a Bible Doctrine

Having, as clearly as we are able, defined predestination, we pass to enquire whether it is a Bible doctrine. If it is a Bible doctrine, we must admit it, or reject the Bible as a record of infallible and eternal truth, and take the open ground of Infidelity. And who can trace the sacred pages of the Holy Book and say that it contains no testimony in support of the doctrine? In the absence of predestination how was it that the prophets of Jehovah foretold the events of ages, thousands of years before those events were actually fulfilled? Who, or what directed the prophetic vision of holy men of old, to look down the vista of intervening centuries, and in the name of the Lord Jehovah predict the things that should come to pass down to the end of time, and even the resurrection of the slumbering dead, and the judgment of the last day. If these things were not before determined of God, how were they known by His prophets? and if they were unknown to God and man how were they foretold so precisely? And if they were foreknown of God, and He inspired holy men to foretell them, then that knowledge and purpose of God was what the Bible calls, predestination. But we have no need of ifs in this investigation.

The Scriptures do most clearly and emphatically declare that "Holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost," that God "spake to the fathers by the prophets," and also that the Spirit of Christ, which was in the prophets, "did testify beforehand of His sufferings and of the glory that should follow" (Hebrews 1:1 & I Peter 1:11). This was and is predestination. God spake by the prophets, saying, "It shall come to pass." Do not these words imply a decree when uttered by Him who speaks the Word, and it stands fast, who commands, and it is done? How harmoniously do both Testaments agree in this fundamental doctrine. Throughout the Old Testament, God, by His prophets, declared the things that "should come pass." Apostles and inspired evangelists in the New Testament respond, saying, "And it came to pass." This is predestination. But perhaps some may demand, "What came to pass?" We reply all that God by the prophets said should come to pass.

First, in reference to the advent of the blessed Savior, for He Himself declared that all that was written of Him in the law, and in the prophets and in the psalms must be fulfilled, and when dying on the cross of Calvary He exclaimed, "It is finished!" and in awful confirmation the retiring sun, prevailing darkness, the quaking earth, rending rocks, opening graves, rising dead, and rending veil of the temple gave ample demonstration. Daniel, in harmony with all the other prophets of the Lord, had predicted that at a specific time the God of heaven should set up a kingdom that should never be destroyed, that the Messiah should come, should be cut off, should make an end of sin, and bring in everlasting righteousness. The New Testament is a record of the faithful and precise fulfillment of these predictions. Long had the prophet slumbered with his fathers, before the accomplishment of his "seventy weeks," but the Word of our God could not die, it liveth and abideth forever. That is predestination.

The Predestination of our God also embraces all the heirs of immortality. "For whom He did foreknow, them He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He did predestinate, them He also called, and whom He called, them He also justified, and whom He did justify them He also glorified" (Romans 8:28-30). This predestinated people is blessed with "all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, according as He (God) hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that they should be holy and without blame before Him in love. Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children, according to the good pleasure of His will.

In whom we have received an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will" (Ephesians 1:4-6,111).

There are those who admit the doctrine of predestination, so far as it applies to the coming of the Savior, the work which He was to perform, the sufferings which He was to endure, and the glory which was to follow; and also in relation to the good works which God before ordained that His people should walk in; but reject the idea that His purpose and foreknowledge extends to the wicked acts of men and devils. This they claim would make God the author of sin. But for ourselves, it is our firm conviction that if a single event could possibly transpire from the creation of the world to the end of time, from the rise and fall of empires, to the falling of a sparrow, or a hair of our head to the ground, that such unforeseen and consequently unprovided for events would unavoidably endanger and render uncertain the execution of what is admitted to be ordained and decreed of God. How could it be otherwise? Can we consistently believe that it was predestinated that Christ should suffer on Calvary to redeem sinners, and yet that He did not foreknow that there would be any sinners to save? Did He decree that His dear Son should be delivered into the hands of wicked men; and yet not contemplate in that decree, either the existence of wicked men, or what they should do in condemning and crucifying Him? But aside from all human reasoning, or vain speculation on the subject, God has informed us, by His inspired Apostles, that Jesus was in fact delivered by His determinate counsel, and foreknowledge, and was actually put to death by wicked hands. And again, the inspired Apostles break forth in praise to God, in devout acknowledgement both of the decree and of its accomplishment, that, "And when they had heard that, they lifted up their voices to God with one accord and said, Lord, Thou art God, which hast made heaven and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is; who by the mouth of Thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things? The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against His Christ. 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" (Acts 4:24-28). Here let it be observed the holy Apostles of the Lamb did not start back with horror, and exclaim, fatalism! This makes God the author of sin! Or this destroys the accountability of man! They saw nothing in all this reflecting unfavorably on the character or purity of the supreme God; but

they saw such harmony in the purpose, decrees, and actual accomplishment of the designs of God, as led them simultaneously and with one accord to lift up their voices in devout adoration and praise to the Most High God, whose providential government was so clearly manifested in controlling all events. The things which they now saw brought to pass were distinctly spoken of by David in his day, and pointed out by the slaughtered lamb which Abel, by faith, offered to God some four thousand years before any of the actors in the crucifixion of Christ, were born. God had not only decreed what they should do, but He had also decreed what they should not do. "The enemy should not exact upon Him, nor the son of wickedness afflict Him." "A bone of Him should not be broken." "He should not be holden of the pains of death." His soul should not be left in hell, nor should His flesh see corruption. Neither death nor hell could go beyond the purpose and decree of God. None but Judas could betray Him, without involving a contradiction of the purpose and decree which was recorded in Psalm 109; the pieces of silver for which He was betrayed were all numbered and recorded in the decree of God and His revelation as published by the prophet hundreds of years before Judas was born. The parting of His raiment, and casting lots for His garment, was all a matter of ancient record, together with all the minute circumstances which occurred; all of which we are informed were done "that the Scripture should be fulfilled."

The murder of the infants by Herod, brought to pass the decree published by the prophet Jeremiah six hundred years before. "Thus saith the Lord, A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, and bitter weeping; Rachel weeping for her children refused to be comforted for her children because they were not" (Jeremiah 31 and Matthew 2:18).

The case also of Joseph and His brethren is a very clear and striking illustration of the overruling government of God, as embracing all events. And who shall dare charge God with unrighteousness, because He retains in His own hand a supreme control of all things and of all events, because He "worketh all things after the counsel of His own will"? Who has a right to infer that God is the fountain of sin or unholiness; when we are informed that men "with wicked hands," do "whatsoever His hand and His counsel before determined to be done"? Paul when declaring what God had said of Pharaoh, that for this very purpose He had raised him up to make His power known in him, etc., anticipated the blasphemous out breakings of the human mind in opposition to the predestination of God. "Thou wilt surely say unto me, Why doth He yet find fault," or hold man as an accountable being, "for

who has resisted His will?" But the Apostle did not forbear to declare this doctrine because men resisted and blasphemed it; but says the Apostle, "Nay, but who art thou, O man, that replieth against God?" etc.

When the enmity of the human heart is subdued by the quickening power and grace of God in regeneration, then the heaven-born child is reconciled to God, and loves to contemplate the power and glory of Jehovah. Then is he prepared, with the inspired psalmist, to rejoice that the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth; that all power in heaven and in earth is vested in the blessed Savior. But if left to doubt His all-pervading power and providence for a moment, now sinks his spirit at the fearful thought that some wheel in the vast, and apparently complicated machinery of nature might be suffered to revolve unbound by the wisdom and foreknowledge of God. If one of the wheels could work without the power and providence of God, its effects might be to ungear the whole system of divine government, and worlds on worlds be dashed in irretrievable ruin. When the enlightened mind of God's dear children contemplates the glory of this subject, they fall down before God in admiration, and with the four beast, and four and twenty elders, cry "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord, God, Almighty." They are filled with the most profound reverence for, and confidence in the God of their salvation.

One reason we have thought why some of the children of God have seemed to be unreconciled to this doctrine is that they have failed to discriminate between the overruling power and providence of God and the effusions of His Spirit. "Let no man say when he is tempted, that he is tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted, neither tempted He any man." When men are tempted to sin they are tempted of their own lusts, and by the devil. But how hopeless and desperate would be the condition of all who are tempted, if God had not the power and providence to control the temptation, and overrule its effect according to His eternal purpose and pleasure for the good of His tried and tempted children, and for the glory of His own great name. Our every temptation, though they flow not from God, are directed, and restricted and made serviceable to His saints, by Him, is absolutely certain. Hence Peter assured the saints that God would control this matter, "He will not suffer you to be tempted beyond that which ye are able; but will also with the temptation make a way for your escape." That glorious High Priest which becomes us, was Himself tempted in all points as His children are, and knows how to succor them that are tempted. Soon after He was baptized, He was led up by the Spirit, unto the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. He was not led there by the devil; but by the Holy Spirit of the Lord God

which was upon Him. Neither was He tempted of the Spirit of God which led Him into the wilderness; but He was tempted of the devil. The devil could neither afflict poor old Job, nor even drown the herd of swine, until he received permission of the Lord, and it is hard for us to think that any of the saints, however shy they may seem to be of the doctrine of predestination, really would wish or be willing that God should have less, or that sin or Satan should have more power. It is a blessed reflection to us that

"Death and hell can do no more
Than what our Father pleases."

Volumes have been written upon this subject, and volumes may still be written. It is too rich and boundless ever to be exhausted, but after all that we can say, it is the Spirit of the Lord alone who can present it in its beauty to the sons of men. He, the Spirit of Truth, whom the world cannot receive, can slay the enmity of our carnal mind, and give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, shining in the face of Jesus Christ. May that Spirit in all its quickening power and grace be with our friends and all others who earnestly desire a knowledge of the true God and eternal life.

Feb.1, 1854.

Although it is common for all wise men to lay out their plans and predetermine, or predestinate what they intend to do, it is exceedingly hard for men to comprehend the doctrine in its application to Him who has "Declared the end from the beginning, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure." Although our Savior has called that man a fool who without predestinating, pre-concerting his arrangements, or predetermining in regard to his undertakings, would attempt to build a house; yet it is thought by many incompatible with the divine perfections of our Lord that He should predetermine, pre-arrange or predestinate, in the building of a world. If God has declared the end from the beginning, He has so declared on the ground of positive knowledge of the end, and if He absolutely foreknew all things, all things must have been before determined, either by Himself or by some other power. If not predetermined by Himself it might well be demanded, "With whom took He counsel, and who instructed Him, or taught Him, when He measured the waters in the hollow of His hand, and meted out the heavens with a span, and comprehended the

dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance?" (Isaiah 40:12-14). We must admit that God possessed all this knowledge of Himself independently, or deny His Omniscience; and we must acknowledge that His perfect knowledge rested on the counsel of His own sovereign will and pleasure, or, conclude that He was instructed by some other, which conclusion we think none who know the Lord will be likely to make. But we need not speculate, nor attempt to establish this matter by inferences, however clearly drawn, for in His holy Word we are informed that it is the theme of reverence and worship of the four beasts in Revelations, and the four and twenty elders, who, falling down before Him, and casting their crowns before His throne, continually cry, "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." (Revelation 4:10,11). And in His Word Jehovah claims that He has "created all things for Himself, yea, even the wicked for the day of evil;" and He says, in vindication of His supreme Godhead, "I form the light, and I create darkness; I make peace and I create evil; I the Lord do all these things." We cannot read these declarations from the mouth of God Himself, and resist the conviction that our God "worketh ALL THINGS after the counsel of His own will" (Ephesians 1:11).

We will speak more particularly on the words, "all things." There are those who profess to believe that God has predestinated some few things, but they cannot comprehend the idea that He has predestinated all things. Among the things which these allow that He has predestinated, are the redemption of His people from sin, and their eternal justification and immortal glory, the unspeakable gift of His dear Son, His advent to our world, His sufferings, death, resurrection and ascension to glory; but they cannot admit that God absolutely ordained that sin should enter into the world, that there should be any sinners to redeem, or that wicked men should, with wicked hands, crucify and slay the Lord of life and glory.

Did the Lord predestinate that Joseph should lay up corn in Egypt, but had nothing to do with his dreams, the envy of his brethren, or any of the circumstances of their projecting his murder, had no hand in sending the Ishmaelitish merchants to intercept their wicked designs, or with his being sold to Potiphar, nor the strange course of Potiphar's wife, or the dreams of the butler and baker, who were fellow prisoners with Joseph? But we confess we cannot conceive how anything can be predestinated unless all things are. In regard to both the cases referred to, we are informed that God

did control all the events. Peter, being inspired by the Holy Spirit, charged upon the Jews the murder of our Redeemer, in these words, "Him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands, have crucified and slain." (Acts 2:23). Again, "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 what Thy hand and Thy counsel determined before to be done" (Acts 4:27,28). In regard to the case of Joseph, God had made known to his great-grandfather Abraham, His control over this matter, and that the children of Israel should sojourn in Egypt, and be entreated evil for the space of four hundred years (Genesis 15:13,14). So also we are informed in the Word that, "The wrath of man shall praise Thee, and the remainder of wrath Thou shalt restrain" (Psalm 75:10). From this last quotation we learn that God, in His providential government, according to His inscrutable wisdom and the eternal counsel of His own will, allows wicked men and devils to go just so far in wickedness as He designs to overrule for His own glory, and no farther; they would if they could, do more, but God restrains them.

His providential government, which is based upon the pleasure of His own will, according to which He works all things, extends to the falling of a sparrow, and the numbering of the hairs of our heads, and it is and should be a consoling thought to all of God's dear children.

But it is argued by the opponents of Predestination, that if God has predestinated all things, man is not accountable; and some go so far as to blasphemously say that God would be the author of sin. The Apostle Paul anticipates the blasphemous cavilings of the enemies of divine sovereignty. "Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth He yet find fault?" or why doth He hold men accountable for their wicked actions? "For who hath resisted His will?" It is true that God's eternal and immutable will cannot be successfully resisted or thwarted, for He "doeth His pleasure in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of earth, and none can stay His hand" (Daniel 4:35). This the Apostle does not deny or modify to avoid their blasphemous cavils; but he says, "Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say unto Him that formed it, Why has Thou made me thus? Hath 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 shew His wrath, and to make His power known, endureth with much long-suffering 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" (Romans 9:20-23).

As it is a mercy to us when God restrains us from sinning, and "leads us not into temptation, but delivers us from evil;" so is a manifestation of His wrath, upon the vessels of wrath, when He endured with long-suffering, or allows them to fill up the cup or allotted measure of their iniquities, and when He "sends them strong delusion that they may believe a lie, that they all may be damned who believe not the truth, but have pleasure in unrighteousness" (II Thessalonians 2:11,12). That the purpose and predestination of all things do not exculpate men from blame, nor involve the supreme Jehovah as the author of sin, in the manner urged by the opponents of the truth, is very apparent from what is recorded in connection with the events to which we have made allusion. Although Christ was delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God; those who were charged with His crucifixion were guilty of doing it with "wicked hands." They acted as voluntarily and maliciously as though no such determinate counsel had determined beforehand what they should do. Joseph told his brethren that God had, for their sake, brought him to Egypt, and although they "meant it for evil, God designed it for good; to save much people alive." Pharaoh was punished for his wickedness, although God had for that purpose raised him up, that He might make His power known in him, and from time to time hardened his heart that he should not let the children of Israel go until God's wonders were displayed in Egypt.

Every intelligent being knows that in committing sin, he acts voluntarily, and follows the impulse of his own depraved nature, and every one who is born of God and taught by His Spirit, knows that sin is the opposite of holiness; that God is holy, and that sin is of the devil and man's lust, and not of God. Still a consciousness of God's supreme power and wisdom, to fix its bounds, and say to it as He has said to the waters of the deep, "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further; and here shall thy proud waves be stayed," affords a strong consolation to all who look alone to God for succor, protection and support, while destined to remain as strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

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