

ABSOLUTE PREDESTINATION

By

William M. Smoot, 1912

“Eternal God whose lofty throne,
Extends beyond all mortal sight,
To puny man Thou art unknown,
Revealed in faith’s exalted flight.”

“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” –

Ephesians 1:11.

We have before us a copy of the “*Messenger of Truth*,” a periodical claiming Old School, published at Laurel Fork, Virginia. In this paper, one of the leading articles is an Editorial attack upon the doctrine of PREDESTINATION. In the same paper appears communications relating experience to which we think no serious objection can be found. We have frequently been made to wonder how any one with an experience of Gospel grace could object to the doctrine of the Eternal, Irrevocable, and Absolute Predestination of All things, whatsoever comes to pass. We are not at all surprised to find opposition to this truth in the world, for the “natural mind” of man revolts at the sovereignty of God; it “is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be” (Romans 7:7). But we are greatly surprised that anyone who has ever felt the touch of the Divine presence, “the powers of the world to come,” should ever question this most precious, soul cheering, and God honoring doctrine. The prophet tells us, however, that, “The leaders of this people cause them to err” (Isaiah 9:16). It was bad nursing (II Samuel 4:4) that caused Mephibosheth’s lameness. And it is false preaching and false teaching that often poisons the minds of the children of God against Gospel truth.

The editorial to which we refer is written in the ingenious manner that

characterizes writings of this character, opponents of the doctrine being apparently in fear that the character of God is assailed by the doctrine of Absolute Predestination; and rush to the front to vindicate the character of Him, whose infinite purity and holiness cannot be called into question; and is therefore not in any sense involved in any discussion of this or any other point of doctrine.

We will quote a few subtle paragraphs from the article in the Messenger:

“God said to Adam, concerning the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, ‘Thou shalt not eat of it.’ Did that mean that Adam could not eat of it? Or did it mean that he should not or ought not? If it had meant that he could not, that he was not and never could be able to eat of it, the penalty would not have been affixed, or if it had been fixed, it never would have been executed.” –unquote.

Now in this extract, we have a **man of straw** set up, and then demolished! The reader will notice the ingenious manner in which the terms could not, should not, and ought not are used. The writer slyly steps aside from the force and meaning of the Scripture that he is discussing. He fails to quote the whole verse, but clips from it one clause, leaving out the essential part. The verse reads: “*But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it; for in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die*” (Genesis 2:17). That God did not intend or predestinate that Adam should eat of this tree, as declared in the editorial to which we refer, is absurd in the face of the declaration: “*In the day that thou eatest thereof.*” Here is not only the prophecy that he should eat of the tree, but the day appointed in which it was to be done. How could this language have ever been used if there was to be no day of the kind named? This declaration reveals both the foreknowledge of Jehovah and predestination. When the full verse is faithfully quoted the sense in which the word shall is used is clearly seen. “*Thou shalt not eat of it; for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.*” That is, Adam “should not,” or “could not” eat of

the **tree and remain in the state of his original creation**. The day that he ate of the tree should mark his fall. The changeless “shalt not” of his Creator was evidenced when he fell from that original state, fell under the law of sin and death, and reached the fulfillment of the second shall,

“Thou shalt surely die.” The meaning of the first shall, is as clear as the second; the first calls for the second. We might transpose the verse, and it would not lose its force” “In the day [predetermined time] that thou eatest of the tree. . . thou shalt surely die; for thou shalt not eat of it [and remain in your present condition in Eden.]”

We might here inquire in what way could the coming of a Savior have been absolutely predestinated, and the entrance of sin, left out of such predestination, left to “chance.” Savior and sinner, salvation and sin are relative terms; the one calls for the other. The same eternal purpose or predestination that absolutely provided, pre-determined, ordained, and predestinated the coming of Christ as the Savior of sinners, as absolutely and irrevocably ordained the fall of Adam, and the consequent entrance of sin.

“Lo, in the fall we are led to espy,
‘Twas all for the lifting of Jesus on high.”

Adam in the original creation was simply an earthly man fitted only to occupy an earthly sphere. He was not fitted for heaven. The fall of Adam was essential to the revelation of Gospel grace in the face of Jesus Christ, and how could such an important factor be other than as the Scripture declares: “*For if by one man’s offence, death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ*” (Romans 5:17). Leave out the fall of Adam and what would have become of the whole economy of Redemption? Hence both sin and salvation must have been embraced in the one full and complete design, purpose, or predestination of God.

When an artist designs a picture, the lines of light, and shades of darkness are embodied in the one design; the dark background must be there to bring out the life- lines of the picture. It is written: “*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. And the earth was without form and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep . . . and God said, Let there be light; and there was light*” (Genesis 1:1-3). Was not this darkness as much a part of the creation as the light? Did not both spring from one creative word that made the heavens and the earth and “all the host of them?”

The Scripture so declares and also gives us the typical meaning of the darkness and light: “*I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the Lord do all these things*” (Isaiah 45:7). When did the Lord form the light and create the darkness; or makes peace and create evil?

The editor of the Messenger sums up his view of the fall of Adam in the following paragraph:

“Did God mean that He would not suffer Adam to eat of the tree? No; but He meant that Adam should not do so; that he had no right from God to eat of it. It was Adam’s duty to obey his Maker, but he disobeyed Him of his own will; he knew better and was not deceived. So the penalty ‘Thou shalt surely die,’ was a just recompense for his disobedience. By the disobedience of this one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin. And had it not been for the intervention of mercy through the atonement of Christ all men without exception would have remained in death under the penalty.” – unquote.

Here is *Arminian “Free Agency” pure and simple*; from which it is clearly seen that this writer, instead of placing the fall of Adam to the Predestination of Almighty God’s determinate counsel, places it upon Adam himself; as an old preacher in West Virginia used to say, “Adam made himself a sinner.” And but for the intervention of Jesus Christ all his posterity would have remained in death. That is, the intervention of

Jesus Christ was an after-thought, after-consideration, a revelation of the mercy of God at the expense of His justice, in order to extricate Adam from the pit into which he had placed himself. This is in line with the Article of Faith of the Kehukee Association of North Carolina, that God made Adam “able to stand, but liable to fall.” What improvement does this make upon the Divine Character? Assuredly He must have foreseen that Adam would fall, if left liable to; and why not, we ask from the stand-point of human wisdom, was not Adam made unable to fall, and thus left without immortality to roam at will in the Garden of Eden, an earthly paradise? Such questions are as the “*wisdom of this world*” which “*are foolishness with God.*” But we quote again from the Messenger:

“The believer has been created in Christ Jesus unto good works. These good works come in after creation; after regeneration; to the saints, after they have been quickened.” –unquote.

Here of course is the “sinner born again theory,” which is the heart’s delight of all Means Baptist- the quickening and regeneration of the natural man. Again we quote:

“If we boast of the ‘wills and shalls’ of Jehovah, let us know how to do it. If they are as some affirm, and the commandment, ‘Thou shalt not steal,’ is addressed to all men, then no man ever stole or committed a theft.” –unquote.

This is the first time we have ever seen in a periodical professedly Old School, the assertion that such a commandment, in the peculiar sense in which they were given, were addressed to all men.

The writer warms up in his discourse, and closes with the following:

“Those who preach that God purposed Adam’s transgression have no authority for what they preach; they draw on their imagination, or use the imagination of others. It contradicts the Bible, sets at naught God’s

word, and makes prayer, preaching, exhortation, rebuke, reproof, and admonition vain things. We verily believe that many good brethren and sisters are deceived by this theory.” – unquote.

Have we not here an example of the character described by the apostle: *“But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them . . . shall speak evil of the things that they understand not”* (II Peter 2:1,12).

In the writings of such honored elders, and Old School fathers as Gilbert Beebe, J.F. Johnson, R.C. Leachman, Samuel Trott, Thomas P. Dudley, Philander Hartwell, David Patman, J.M. Theobald, and a host of others, the doctrine now so bitterly assailed was clearly proclaimed for an hundred years. It has remained for a crop of youngsters who have crept in unawares (II Timothy 3:6) into the Means Baptist ministry to assume superior knowledge to the Baptist fathers of former days; and more important still to *“holy men of God”* who spake as they were *“moved by the Holy Ghost”* (II Peter 1:21).

But let us pass to more fully consider the subject at the head of our article: ABSOLUTE PREDESTINATION. We have but little use for the term “absolute,” only as it more clearly distinguishes the doctrine to which our enemies object. The word as we use it with Predestination, means predestination without limit. Yet predestination when used alone certainly means this also. The character of God is above reproach; can never be measured by human reason, or comprehended by the natural mind. *“No man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him”* (Matthew 11:27). The revelation that He has been pleased to make of Himself manifests His eternal self-existence. *“I AM THAT I AM”* (Exodus 3:14). *“I am the LORD and there is no God besides Me”* (Isaiah 45:5). *“There is no power but of God; and the powers that be, are ordained of God”* Romans 13:1. We might quote without limit testimony

clearly revealing the infinite self-existence, the boundless power, and wisdom of God.

Self-existence is an attribute of Sovereign power. Eternity, nor time can hold but one self-existent Being, and that Being is the great “I AM,” all other beings depend for existence upon Him who “*is before all things, and by Him all THINGS consist*” (Colossians 1:17). “Predestination” is a New Testament term, and used but few times. It is somewhat similar, but not entirely in meaning to the word “purpose,” a word used more frequently, and in both Testaments. Paul instructed Timothy to “rightly divide the word of truth” (II Timothy 2:15). To rightly divide the word of truth is to place each point of doctrine in its proper place, for each point of the “*doctrine of God our Savior*” has a certain bearing in the great work of Redemption.

The apostle connects the doctrine of Predestination with Election, placing Predestination immediately after Election. “*For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son*” (Romans 8:29). “*According as He hath chosen us in Him, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love; having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will*” (Ephesians 1:1.5).

From the order in which these two points of doctrine are placed in this and other New Testament connections, it is evident that Election is one, if not really the basic principle of the Gospel system; and that Predestination is the Divine warrant of the eternal triumph of the election of grace. The full verse from which we have partly quoted reads: “For whom He did foreknow, 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 justified, them He also glorified” (Romans 8:29,30). Predestination is here given, insuring the call, the justification, and glorification of the election of grace.

“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” (Ephesians 1:11). In this text we have both the purpose and predestinated used with a slight difference only in the meaning of the two words. Predestination is used here as in other Scriptural testimony, connected with the *“inheritance of the saints in light.”* The choice in Christ is first referred to, and Predestination insures in all the heirs of promise the security of their redemption in Christ Jesus.

“According to the purpose of Him who worketh all things”. The **“all things”** to which reference is here made may be more especially the calling, justification, and glorification of the election of grace; but the doctrine of Predestination covers all this ground; not only directly, but all that has, what may be termed an indirect connection. In the revelation of the stupendous work of Redemption; crowned with the glory and honor of the Lord Jesus Christ, it was necessary that an arena be provided where this work should be done, hence time was brought into being for God’s good pleasure, (Revelation 4:11,) and for the manifestation of the wonders of His will.

In the verse preceding the text the apostle clearly presents the work of predestination: *“That in the dispensation of the fullness of times, He might gather together in one all things in Christ.”* Time and time’s creatures were created for the development of this great work; it was to be made manifest *“in the dispensation of the fullness of times.”* Hence all created things directly or indirectly tend to the one great end for which they were created under the master hand of the great Architect of the universe; the Creator of all worlds; and the Disposer of all events.

Who dare question that this all powerful God, Jehovah, the I AM THAT I AM, who purposed in eternity; and holds complete control of all the eternal developments revealing the salvation and glorification of His chosen family, would fail to securely keep in the grasp of His Almighty power the manifestation of this eternal purpose through all the changing scenes of time; or that He would create anything which He could not

govern; or that the far reaching revelation of the purpose or predestination of God should leave out of its secure, accurate, and irrevocable ordination a single event, to come by “chance,” permission, [permissive decrees], or any other agency save alone the eternal decrees, the purpose and predestination of Almighty God. He alone is responsible, as He alone possesses absolute power. He has not delegated such responsibility to any of His creatures, whether men or devils. He seeks not to evade His own responsibility, but entirely assumes it in the testimony before quotes: *“I form the light, and create darkness; I make peace, and create evil; I the LORD do all these things.”* (Isaiah 45:7).

As stated, the “all things” in our text may refer to the varied exhibitions of His grace in the salvation of Israel; yet they cannot ignore, but must necessarily embrace, the scenes of time in which these displays are made. For instance, the crucifixion of Christ was necessary, but wicked men must be raised up, a cross supplied, a wicked king enthroned; all these visible, temporal things must be provided [predestinated] at the proper time *“by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God”* (Acts 2:23). And all these wicked agencies were raised up as Pharaoh was raised up and his heart hardened (Exodus 7:13) *“for to do whatsoever Thy hand and Thy counsel determined before to be done”* (Acts 4:28).

The crucifixion of Christ so far as being a result of predestination, was neither an isolated, nor an exceptional case; but an example of all time’s developments; all absolutely all, whether good or evil or indifferent, large or small, must have some bearing direct or remote upon the glory of God in Christ Jesus; the objects for which all worlds and all things were created by God.

“Predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things.” For the only and best of causes He can work “all things”; For by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things [without exception] **were created by**

Him, and for Him” (Colossians 1:16). We are aware that those who would pervert this testimony are experts in playing upon words, and might take exception to the phrase “*worketh all things;*” that it could not be construed to sustain the doctrine of predestination. The reader will notice that this clause is not the important clause of the text; but that the purpose and predestination of God, are the essential factors in the text; “*Being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things.*”

Let us transpose this part of the verse, and while retaining its force, we see more clearly its meaning, “He who works all things has predestinated them according to His purpose.” That is, the inheritance referred to in the text is obtained [experienced] according to the purpose and predestination of God. Predestination then secures the execution of the purpose; the development of the eternal design; the Divine medium through which this development is secured; and this predestination is “according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will.”

Predestination also is the absolute ordination of the “all things” embodied in this purpose, and embraced in this working. The apostle in the 8th chapter of Romans covers this same ground, but in a somewhat different manner. He tells us of the “all things” predestinated and working together for the good of the saints, and for the glory of God. In the “all things” are named tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, and the sword, death, [all considered “evil”]; death, life, angels, principalities, powers &c. These are among the “all things” alluded to in our subject, and these can be termed of a temporal character: things of time.

We might take up the things to which the apostle refers one by one, and see how clearly we can trace the predestination of God. His ruling hand is seen in each event: as no depths of poverty [famine] to which the saints can be subject, no peril, misrepresentation, no depths of great sorrow [tribulation] or sore bereavement &c. These things are essential

to the development of that people who are chosen in the furnace of affliction; and the apostle concludes his summary of these things that attend their pilgrimage with the promise: “*All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose.*”

From what we have written then it will be seen that the Scriptures teach that God has created all things, and works all things in the sense in which He has predestinated them according to His good purpose to work together for the good of His elect; that these things must cover the things of time, as time itself was brought into existence for the good pleasure of God, and the development of His purpose, as purposed in Christ Jesus before the world began.

The enemies of the doctrine object to it, more especially upon the principle of the predestination of evil things. They assume to themselves ability to measure the character of Jehovah. What blasphemy! To claim ability to measure the character of that great, Almighty God clothed in the dazzling splendor, the infinite purity and holiness of heaven; and to measure His character by that wisdom which He is pleased to term “foolishness” (I Corinthians 3:19;) and all this in face of the declaration; that the world “by wisdom knew not God” (I Corinthians 1:21).

The text tells us that the “all things” which we have discussed in this article are working “*after the counsel of His own will*” (Ephesians 1:11). Mark the positive assertion: “**His [God’s] own will.**” He does not consult with men or devils. “*For who hath known the mind of the Lord; or who hath been His counsellor?*” (Romans 11:34). “*Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to Him that form it, Why hast Thou made me thus?*” (Romans 9:20). These are pertinent questions to such foolish criticism. The entire question regarding the predestination of evil things, as the fall of Adam, rests upon what God Himself declares upon the subject. Could there be, or has there been an act of greater wickedness than the crucifixion of Christ? And yet what saith the Scripture of it? “*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 4:27,28). To this Scripture we will add a few quotations of similar import. “*All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made.*” “*Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field, which the Lord God had made*” (Genesis 3:1). Was he not wicked?

Does not this Scripture do away with the foolish notion of some of a self-existent devil? Again, let us quote: “*The Lord hath made all things for Himself; yea, even the wicked for the day of evil*” (Proverb 16:4). “*I make peace, and create evil (Ra); I the LORD do all these things*” (Isaiah 45:7). “*Shall there be evil (Ra) in the city, and the LORD hath not done it?*” (Amos 3:6). “*I have created the waster to destroy*” (Isaiah 54:16). “*Vessels of wrath **fitted** to destruction*” (Romans 9:22). “*And I will harden Pharaoh’s heart*” (Exodus 7:3). “*Declaring the end from the beginning*” (Isaiah 46:10).

Will opponents of the doctrine inform us how the end could be declared from the beginning, and events between left out? “*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*” (Daniel 4:35). “*Therefore hath He mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will He hardeneth*” (Romans 9:18). “*He turned their heart to hate His people*” (Psalm 105:25). “*And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie*” (II Thessalonians 2:11). We quote but a few from abundant Biblical testimony upon this subject. Evidently prophets and apostles were not afraid of the doctrine maintained in this article.

Events must take place by predestination or by chance; and how can anything be secured by chance? A single chance shot may at any time destroy the whole structure of God creation. If they take place by predestination, it must be of God, of men, or of devils; and how by the

devil who is but a creature of God, and could not even go into the herd of swine without permission (Matthew 8:32); or yet in man whose breathe “is in his nostrils” (Isaiah 2:22). Then absolutely and truly of God who does what He pleases “*in heaven, and in earth, and in the seas, and all deep places*” (Psalm 135:6) do all these things take place.

“O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? Or who hath been His counsellor? Or who hath first given to Him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are ALL THINGS: to whom be glory for ever. Amen” (Romans 11:33-36).

W.M. Smoot

From *THE SECTARIAN*: November, 1912.