

The Remnant

*“Even so then at this
present time also there
is a remnant according to
the election of grace.”
Romans 11.5*

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PREDESTINATION

by

Elder Frederick W. Keene (1856—1937),
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I came upon these words the other day. “None should go the University of Predestination until they have been at the grammar school of faith and repentance.” I have known one or two persons who imagined themselves to have graduated from the University, and to have attained to all knowledge upon that subject, and yet made no profession and gave no token that they had been taught of God one jot or tittle of the knowledge of repentance towards God or faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

There are many millions of Christless predestinarians in the world today. The Mohammedans are firm believers in predestination of all things, but they do not know our precious Savior Jesus Christ. According to Josephus, the Pharisees were predestinarians, but with the exception of a remnant of them according to the election of grace they were enemies of God and of Christ. Let not any one think that I am making light of predestination,

for with all my heart I believe in God’s predestination of all things. It is (my soul confesses) all of the sovereign kindness of God to be taught of Him, and He gives His own elect a teachable spirit; their hearts are opened to what He speaks. “Yea, He loved the people; all His saints are in Thy hand; and they sat down at Thy feet; every one shall receive of Thy words.” (Deut. 33:3.) Before I was sixteen years of age I was brought, as I hope, by divine teaching through sore exercises of soul to believe that God’s decrees embraced all the things in the universe; that all that has been, is or shall be, is all declaring the one eternal thought of God; and since then, though unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out, so I believe. But I do not want that Christless predestination of Mohammedans and Pharisees. All these predestinarians are, in my view of them, only limited predestinarians. Their vision of God’s predestination is so circumscribed because, having no knowledge of Jehovah’s covenant of grace in our Lord Jesus Christ “ordered in all things and sure,” they have no eyes to see, no heart to perceive the vast realms of grace and glory, declared in the gospel of Christ, wherein the mightiest and

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most glorious, and, shall I say, the fairest and sweetest acts of God are wrought, in the Person of the "the Word made flesh," in the works of redemption, and regeneration, all according to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord. Here all the glories of the eternal God are revealed, and here we may contemplate the heights and depths—the lengths and breadths of God's absolute, immutable predestination.

It is inconceivable that the all-wise almighty God created and made any thing purposeless, or that any thing should fail to fulfill, or exceed, His purpose. Who can point to the things or creatures, or anything done by anything, animate or inanimate that were created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible or invisible, whether they be thrones or dominions or principalities or powers, and say of Him whose understanding is infinite, and for whose pleasure they are and were created, He hath no purpose therein? There is not an atom in the universe that God hath no purpose in, and it shall fulfill the purpose, and nothing else, of the all-wise, omnipotent Creator. I am comforted and strengthened in my contemplations of the eternal counsel of Jehovah's will, so compre-

hensive, so limitless and so clearly testified of in the Scriptures, and though “the glories of Thy mind leave all our soaring thoughts behind,” though the heights and depths of the decrees and government “of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will” are beyond our finite understanding, yet let me bow at His footstool, believing that all His ways are judgment, a God of truth, and without iniquity, just and right is He. We, it may be, purposed things a year ago, a month ago, yesterday; today we have other intentions. Our purposes, whether new or old, we cannot bring to the desired end. “There are many devices in a man’s heart; nevertheless, the counsel of God, that shall stand” (Proverbs 19:21). God’s purposes are all eternal, and He is without variableness or shadow of turning (James 1:17). “I know the thoughts that I think towards you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.”

His thoughts are not frustrated; they are not as man’s that perish, but “the counsel of the Lord standeth forever, the thoughts of His heart to all generations” (Psalm 33:11). God’s unalterable decrees and His foreknowledge are in absolute agreement. Shall we acknowledge God’s understanding to be limitless? So the counsel of His will in absolute oneness with His understanding hath no bounds. “Great is the Lord, and of great power: His understanding is infinite (Psalm 147:5).”

“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). It is painful that there are a few brethren who are opponents of Jehovah’s unlimited predestination, and that in their representation of the attributes of God they should reveal a lamentable lack of Bible knowledge of

the Eternal God. The most of them admit His foreknowledge to be infinite, but imagine His determinate counsel to be circumscribed. If anything is, or transpires, how hath it being? How does it come to pass? If beyond the bounds of God’s determinate counsel, then the things done would be acts of self determinate beings. But there are no such beings, save One, the Eternal God, who inhabiteth eternity. Eternity past and to come He inhabiteth. Jehovah’s omniscience, omnipresence, and omnipotence possess eternity. O from everlasting to everlasting Thou art God, in all Thy perfections, infinite. The language of the Bible declaring our God is very sacred: “The determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God” (Acts 2:23). “The good pleasure of His will (His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself) being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh ALL THINGS after the counsel of His own will” (Ephesians 1:5-11). The counsel of His own will does not vary, for our “God is in one mind, and who can turn Him? And what His soul desireth, even that He doeth. For He performeth the thing that is appointed for me, and many such things are with Him” (Job 23:13-14). Thus Job spake when he was in the furnace of affliction. God’s will is self-determined; in this he has no peer. He saith, “I change not.” He is without variableness or shadow of turning. We read of “the immutability of His counsel” (Hebrews 6:17-20).

How common are the utterances, “We must trust in providence,” or when events have in some unforeseen way been in our favor, “How providential,” but when our plans are frustrated, when our prospects are wrecked, when adversities and painful afflictions befall us, are they any less providential? And who is the Provider, the Governor of all providences? “The

Lord Omnipotent reigneth!” Job’s wife said unto him, “Doest thou still retain thine integrity? Curse God and die.” But he said unto her, “Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What! Shall we receive good at the hand of God; and shall we not receive evil?”

Perhaps we have known, or it may be have read, of some dreadful event, and the thought of it has had a dreadful effect upon us; we have been staggered at the enormity of the cruelty, the crime, the affliction, our heart has been depressed, sick, as if it were bruised: Did it happen by chance, or is there an omnipotent, all-wise Jehovah who “hath decreed in Himself from all eternity, by the most wise and holy counsel of His own will, freely and unchangeably, all things whatsoever come to pass, yet so as thereby is God neither the author of sin, nor hath pleasure therein”? (London Baptist Confession, Chapter 3, Paragraph 1.) I firmly believe the latter, and though we cannot see why God hath ordained it so, yet He is just and true in all His ways.

“There’s not a sparrow or a worm
But’s found in His decree;
He raises monarchs to their thrones,
And sinks them as He please.

If light attends the course I run;
'Tis He provides those rays;
And 'tis His hand that hides my sun
If darkness cloud my days.”

Are you always in acquiescence to God’s dark, distressing providences? No, I have been unreconciled, fretful, I have murmured. This has been my shame. But the Lord has in mercy subdued my heart, and though His providences I could not fathom, yet I have said in my spirit, “Thy will be done.” I have loathed myself be-

cause of my hard thoughts of God, and prayed for forgiveness, and have felt through Jesus’ precious blood that sweet pardon was mine. But some have raged and cursed God, and have died in their sin? Dreadfully so! The thought of this has humbled me before the Lord. Amazing grace, so sovereign, free, bestowed upon a worm like me!

“Woe unto them that decree unrighteous decrees, and that write grievousness which they have prescribed” (Isaiah 10:1). This can never be said of Jehovah’s eternal decrees. Read the entire chapter and know that in all the wickedness in men in seeking to carry out their wicked decrees it was all to the fulfillment of God’s decree, and “the consumption decreed (according to the most wise and holy counsel of His will) shall overflow with righteousness. For the Lord God of hosts shall make a consumption, even determined, in the midst of the land” (Isaiah 10:22-23).

The Assyrians in their pillage and slaughter of the people, in their havoc and desolation that they spread over the lands, had no thought therein to fulfill the purpose of the most High God. “Howbeit he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so; but it is in his heart to destroy and cut off nations not a few.” O, he was proud, he esteemed himself wise and prudent, glorying in his robberies and in his supposed “strength,” a valiant man. Yet he was but God’s “axe” and “saw” and “rod” and “staff” to execute His counsel, and his damnation slumbered not, for thus saith the Lord, “Wherefore it shall come to pass, that when the Lord hath performed His whole work upon Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks.” Behold in this chapter the partial execution of man’s unrighteous decrees, and therein the

complete fulfillment of God's holy decrees. [Today, the Assyrians are the Kurds, and have not nation, but are ruled by Syria, Turkey, Iran and Iraq!] Behold the judgment and mercy, the goodness and severity of God, and believe that not only in the providences, such as are portrayed in this chapter, but also,

“In heaven, and earth, and air, and seas,
He executes His firm decrees;
And by His saints it stands confessed
That what He does is ever best.”

He is God in heaven above, and in the earth beneath. “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?” “Lift up your eyes on high, and behold Who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number: He calleth them all by names by the greatness of His might, for that He is strong in power: not one faileth” (Isaiah 40:26.) “Fear ye not Me? Saith the Lord: will ye not tremble at My presence, which have placed the sand for the bound of the sea, by a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass it; and though the waves thereof toss themselves, yet can they not pass over it” (Jeremiah 5:22). “Behold the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold He taketh up the isles as a very little thing. And Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor the beast thereof sufficient for a burnt offering. All nations before Him are as nothing, and they are counted to Him less than nothing, and vanity” (Isaiah 40:15-17).

“He giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; and hath made of one blood all nations of men, for to dwell on all the face of the earth; and hath determined the times before

appointed, and the bounds of their habitation” (Acts 17:25-26).

“Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows” (Matthew 10:29-31). God saith to the church at Smyrna, “Ye shall have tribulation ten days” (Revelation 2:10). If God has appointed the number of ten days, they cannot be diminished, and we never shall have eleven.

“There is a time to be born and a time to die” (Eccles. 3:2). “Man's days are determined, the number of his months are with thee, thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass” (Job 14:5). “Notwithstanding they hearkened not unto the voice of their father, because the Lord would slay them” (I Sam. 2:25; II Sam. 12:11; II Sam. 16:22). “So now it was not you that sent me hither but God” (Gen. 45:8). “For it was of the Lord to harden their hearts, that they should come against Israel in battle, that he might destroy them utterly” (Joshua 11:20). Read, child of God, Romans 9:10-24. The most notable instances on record declaring the foreknowledge and predestination of God, and wherein man's wickedness and God's love-deeds were enacted, where darkness and light, man's shame and God's glory are exhibited are in Acts 2:23-24: “Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it.” Thus the Apostle Peter preached on the day of Pentecost. And now let us together contemplate the sacred scene recorded in the 4th chapter of Acts. The church of Christ at Jerusalem were all firm believers

in Jehovah's immutable, unfrustrable predestination of all things. Peter and John had been brought before the council; but finding nothing how they might punish them, they let them go. "And being let go, they went to their own company; and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them." These were their brethren and companions, the church of our precious Lord Jesus Christ. What was the effect of their report? "And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord." There was no discordant voice in all this assembled multitude, for "the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul" (Acts 4:32).

"They lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, (Who did they say this to? They said it to the Lord God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and their Father, who is in heaven.) Lord, thou art God, which hath 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 (Psalm 2:1-2).

"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."

Those who are enemies of God's all-wise immutable, unfrustrable predestination of all things in their cunning craftiness to deceive, in their opposition to this Bible doctrine, state the fact that in our King James translation of the Bible the words predestinate and predestinated are only recorded four times. And thus, say they, predestination is limited to the salvation

of the church, to what they designate as good things; and that no wicked acts are embraced in the predestination of God. But in the Greek of the New Testament Scriptures this very selfsame Greek word is found in two other places; here in Acts 4:28, and in I Cor. 2:7. "We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before (proorizo', predestinated) before the world unto our glory." So in Romans 8:29-30, "proorizo" is translated predestinate; and in Eph. 1:5-11, "proorizo" is translated predestinated. Stephen, just before he was stoned to death exclaimed, "Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which shewed before the coming of the Just One; of Whom ye have been the betrayers and murderers? (Acts 7:51-52)."

The Holy Christ Jesus was delivered by God the Father into the hands of wicked men who crucified and slew Him. As prophesied in the second Psalm, they raged and imagined vain things, they nailed Him to the cross, they "railed on Him, wagging their heads, and saying, Ah, thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself and come down from the cross. Likewise also the chief priests mocking said among themselves with the scribes. He saved others; himself he cannot save. Let Christ the King of Israel descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe. And they that were crucified with him reviled him" (Mark 15:29-32). The Scripture was fulfilled, which said, "And was numbered with the transgressors" (Isaiah 53:12). "They were gathered together for to do whatsoever thy hand and counsel determined (**proorizo'**, predestinated) to be done."

Take a glimpse of this “whatsoever” as portrayed in the Scriptures. “The Son of Man goeth as it is written of him” (Matt. 26:24). “Truly the Son of Man goeth, as it was determined: but woe unto that man by whom he is betrayed” (Luke 22:22). “Messiah shall be cut off” (Daniel 9:26). “How is it written of the Son of Man that he must suffer many things, and be set at nought” (Mark 9:12). “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up” (John 3:14; Num. 21:9).

“Herod with his men of war set him at nought, and mocked him, and arrayed him in a gorgeous robe, and sent him again to Pilate” (Luke 23:11). “Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes we were healed” (I Peter 2:24). “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law being made a curse for us, for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree” (Gal. 3:13; Deut. 21:23). “The Lamb of God was verily foreordained before the foundation of the world” (1 Peter 2:20). Judas, that son of perdition, betrayed him (John 17:12). “He went to his own place” (Acts 2:25). “Many bulls have compassed me: strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round. They gaped upon me with their mouths, as a ravening and roaring lion. I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels. My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me unto the dust of death. For dogs have compassed me; the assembly of the wicked have enclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet. I may tell all my bones; they look and stare upon me. They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture” (Psalm

22:12-18). “And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand: and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, king of the Jews! And they spit upon him, and took the reed, and smote him on the head. And after they had mocked him they took the robe off from him, and put his own raiment on him, and led him away to crucify him” (Matt. 27:29-31).

They crucified him, “They pierced my hands and my feet” (Zech. 12:10; Rev. 1:7). “Then the soldiers, when they have crucified Jesus, took his garments, and made four parts, to every soldier a part; and also his coat: now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout. They said therefore among themselves, Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be: that the Scripture might be fulfilled, which saith, They parted my raiment among them, and for my vesture they did cast lots. These things therefore the soldiers did” (John 19:23-24).

“Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scriptures might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst. Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar; and they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to his mouth. When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head and gave up the ghost” (John 19:28-30).

“Reproach hath broken my heart; I am full of heaviness: and I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none. They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink” (Psalm 69:20-21). “A bone of him shall not be broken” (John 19:36; Exod. 12:46; Num. 9:12). “This cometh to pass that the word might be fulfilled that is written in

their law, They hated me without a cause” (John 15:25; Psalm 69:4).

There was not a discordant voice in all the assembled multitude, for they “were of one heart and one soul.” And their being thus of one accord was the divine and gracious fruit of their being wrought and taught of the Lord. Did the Lord chide them, tell them they were mistaken in thus ascribing to his hand and counsel all that these wicked ones with wicked hands had done; that they “were gathered together, for to do whatsoever (neither more nor less) thy hand and thy counsel determined before (proorizo, predestinated) to be done”? “And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.” My heart is in accord with the doctrine and faith of the Church of Christ at Jerusalem. I should like to have been there. This first New Testament Church of Christ were all heart-felt believers in Jehovah’s predestination of all things: and in all graciousness and simplicity of heart they confessed this unto the Lord their God. He did not rebuke them for thus lifting up their voice with one accord to himself. But, they were all filled with the Holy Ghost. God thus approved of their faith: they thus believed according to the working of his mighty power. I am in my very heart and soul in accord with the church of Christ at Jerusalem. Are you? Hallelujah! For the Lord God omnipotent reigneth! Many other accounts are narrated in the Scriptures in which God’s predestination is clearly seen, as the life of Joseph; Shimei cursing David (II Sam. 16:5-13); and David numbering the people (II Sam. 24).

Look at the case of Peter’s denial of Christ. “Thou shalt deny me thrice.” Is it only Peter’s

wickedness foretold? Is that the only thing to be? No, indeed! Peter was weak, cowardly, sinful enough to have denied Christ many more times that night; but he could only deny Jesus three times. God’s holy power restrained him. That look of injured love from Jesus’ eyes put a stop to his denials, cursing and swearing, and Peter went out and wept bitterly. What else was foretold by Jesus to Peter? Many things. “Before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice” (Mark 14:30). This denotes the time when the third denial would be consummated. “Immediately, while yet he spake, the cock crew.”

This was told, “Satan hath desired to have thee that he may sift thee as wheat.” This is a scene of invisible wickedness of the adversary, the devil, “But I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not, and when thou are converted, strengthen thy brethren.” This is beautiful! Scenes of love, compassion, grace, covenant faithfulness, a broken heart, of divine healing, holy fortitude, and willing service. It says, I love thee, Peter, I have prayed for thee, thy faith in me shall not fail, I will not give thee up, thou shalt not be plucked out of my hand. I am thy Friend and Intercessor before the Majesty in the heavens. “When thou are converted.” Notwithstanding your sinful, shameful denials of me thou shalt be converted, I will heal thy backslidings, I will love thee freely. Jesus knows how he will accomplish Peter’s conversion. O that look from Jesus’ eyes! “When thou are converted, strengthen thy brethren.” Peter did, declaring, “We are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time. (I Peter 1:5). “Thy brethren.” The household of God. I will not cast thee out of the family, I will not disown thee. During all

the time of thy shameful sinning against me, mine eyes and my heart shall be ever toward thee (I Kings 9:3). "I shall earnestly remember thee still, I will surely have mercy upon thee" (Jer. 31:20). "Thou shalt deny me thrice"; not four times, not twice, thrice is one time more than twice. It was all in God's foreknowledge and predestination, the whole chain. It is not the scriptural way of declaring God's predestination to hold up an item and contend that it was predestinated and forget all other things in the account. This is an error of the opponents of God's predestination who hold up some awful sinful act, and exclaim, Was that predestinated? If so, etc., etc.

"Deep in unfathomable mines
Of never failing skill,
He treasures up his bright designs
And works his sovereign will."

The Lord by the mouth of the Prophet Isaiah, Saith, "Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else, I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, 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 also will bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I also will do it" (Isaiah 46:10.11).

Thus God called Cyrus, the king of Persia, a ravenous bird: and cities and nations were given him; as a prey to his ravenous armies. This was the Lord's determinate counsel. Who shall dare to say, What doest thou? O child of God, believe in our Lord Jesus Christ, trace the streams of love and mercy up to their foun-

tain, God, and in his sacred bosom see eternal thoughts of love to thee, and to all his people whom he hath chosen in Christ Jesus, before the foundation of the world, that they should be holy and without blame before him in love. He hath blessed them with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. He hath predestinated them unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ unto himself. He hath predestinated them unto an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away. He hath ordained them unto eternal life, he chose them unto salvation, to redemption by the blood of the Lamb of God, who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world. He hath chosen them to be holy and without blame before him in love, he hath predestinated them to be conformed to the image of his dear Son, he hath called them unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus.

"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. What shall we then say to these things?" (Rom. 8:30-31). Read on to the end of this chapter, and all that can be said is said. Truly all this is that wisdom of God, which God ordained before ("proorizo", predestinated) the world unto our glory (I Cor. 2:7). In the everlasting covenant God speaks, "I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts, and will be their God, and they shall be my people" (Jer. 31:33). "They shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people; and they shall say The Lord is my God" (Zech 13:19). And when the end cometh, the redemption of the purchased possession is accomplished by the resurrection of those that are Christ's at his coming. For, behold, I show you a mystery, (saith the

Apostle Paul) we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.

This shall be the crowning act of our adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body; the creature shall then in spirit and soul and body be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God, then we shall be conformed to the image of God's dear Son, we shall bear the image of the Heavenly.

We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is, and we shall ever be with the Lord in eternal glory. And we shall then indeed know that it all from eternity was the determinate counsel of our heavenly Father; the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord. But I desire, and will endeavor to tell you of the more personal experiences of my soul in relation to God's predestination.

The subject with me has not been a mere philosophical speculation, a plaything for the mind, as fate, the doctrine of necessity was with some ancient heathen philosophers. It has been more to me than a Biblical research, so that I could defend the doctrine. And the effects of believing, the doctrines have not been as a license to wickedness; neither has it hardened my spirit in stoical apathy, but I have found it to be both sacred and wholesome. In the trying dispensations of his providence it has been my soul's rest to believe, "My times are in thy hand" (Psalm 31:15).

"Sovereign Ruler of the skies!
Ever gracious, ever wise!
And my times shall ever be
Ordered by Thy wise decree."

A few times in my life I have experienced deep, sore, and sacred exercises of soul over God's decrees relative to my own sinfulness. These cogitations have been before God, between my soul and God, when I have felt he was sacredly near.

Although some have not perhaps experienced such exercises, yet I believe there are examples of the same declared in the scriptures, and therefore I will tell how the doctrine has wrought in my soul's experience. Before doing so let me again tell you what I mean by "God having decreed in himself from all eternity, by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely and unchangeably, all things whatsoever come to pass; yet so as thereby is God neither the author of sin, nor hath pleasure with any therein." I firmly believe that God's predestination is so limitless as not to be bounded, as regards the creature man, to things that may be seen in our fellows, as the show of a man's countenance (Isaiah 3:9), whereby may be indicated pleasure or discomfort, love or hatred, pity or scorn, or his speech, or his visible deeds, but God's foreknowledge and predestination embrace the unseen acts of the creature. For man's invisible acts, (invisible to man), the thoughts and intents of the heart (Heb. 4:12), are by far the worse, and by the operations of God's grace in the heart, by far the best acts that any creature on earth brings forth. "God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil and that continually" (Gen. 6:5).

“They thought upon his name” (Mal. 3:16). Man is always more wicked in his heart than he is in his outward acts, for he is not capable of putting into execution, to the uttermost, the thoughts and intents of his heart. And when I am speaking of my sins I am not speaking of my outward acts. My outward life has not been without many blemishes; but God, in riches of mercy, has so kept me since he gave me hope in Christ crucified (now, 1926, over 55 years ago), that my behavior has been what people call good; yes, I consider it a great mercy from the Lord to be kept from external sins. But all my outward life has no beauty in my eyes, I see it all deformed, sin polluted. It is nothing in which I glory, or trust. It is nothing but “filthy rags” (Isaiah 64:6). But though from day to day my life may be circumspect, yet in the thoughts and intents of the heart I have been made to feel I am a poor, vile sinner. I frequently sigh over my sinful emotions, and I am moved to prayer to the Lord for relief, for forgiveness, that he will suppress the evils of my heart, and keep me from the executions of my sinful thoughts, and hope and consolation I have many times found in the cleansing blood of the Lamb of God.

Then there have been times when I have had the most dreadful and bitter consciousness of my inward iniquity. I cannot describe the depravities that have been shown me, filling me with dismay and grief, but this will cover it all: “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, who can know it?” O so great and holy and dreadful has God’s name been to me that I have felt I am too contemptible, too vile, I dare not lift up my eyes unto heaven; unto me belongeth shame and confusion of face. Ah, sin burdened I have been before the Lord, and more than once there have been suggestions, and taunting darts thrust into

my mind, the language of which has been: “Never mind, it had to be, take your fill of sin.” These dreadful thoughts have pierced me, made me shudder years before I ever heard the lips of man utter them. I have known a few men talk in this way, which has persuaded me that the spirit in which they talked was not of God. Does any one imagine God’s predestination is an excuse, license, to continue in sin? If there is any such person let him know that he does not know the grace of God, and let not his seared conscience flatter him that all is well with him, for the grace of God is an effectual teacher. Read Titus 2:11-14, and the “us” of whom the apostle speaks find this grace effectual to denying all ungodliness and worldly lusts. It teaches that we must not indulge sinful thoughts, intents, emotions; God’s grace is a continual life-long teaching, and the fruits of grace will appear in the lives of the “us” who are taught by the grace of God. Instead of wickedly imagining that we have license to sin, because grace abounds, if we know the grace of God in truth (Col. 1:6), we shall exclaim, “God forbid” (Rom. 6:2). I hope by God’s grace ever to loathe my sins, and to loathe myself because of my sins (Ezek. 20:43). I expect while in the body to find cruel sinfulness there, for I know that in me, that is, in my flesh there dwells no good thing. I often cry to God that I may be tender-hearted, easily hurt by my sinfulness, and that I may crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts. O, I so dread to become hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. Well, amidst all the commotions within me because of sin there have come into my mind thoughts, such as, Are not all the thoughts and emotions of your sinful self embraced in God’s foreknowledge and predestination? Are not all things under the dominion of the Lord God omnipotent who reigneth? Jesus answered

Pilate, "Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above" (John 19:11). "Thus saith the Lord God, It shall also come to pass that at the same time shall things come into thy mind, and thou shalt think an evil thought" (Ezek. 38:10). "And he shall speak great words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and think to change the times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand, until a time and times and the dividing of time" (Dan. 7:25).

My spirit, compassed with infirmities, has asked the Lord foolish questions; I have said, Why this? Why that? questions to which I have obtained little or no answer. I have talked very ignorantly before the Lord. "I have uttered things that I understood not" (Job 42:3).

When I have mourned over my sin, and while I have been tasting the sweetness of the pardon of my sins, I have asked, "Why dost thou show me iniquity, and cause me to behold grievance" (Hab. 1:3), in my sinful heart? It is written of Hezekiah, "God left him to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart" (II Chron. 32:31). But I have said unto the Lord, I do not want to know the sinfulness of my heart, surely, Lord, I know enough, it grieves me so.

There are dreadful thoughts thrust into the mind by the devil, "fiery darts" (Eph. 6:16). Without the Almighty he has no more power than Pilate, no power at all. But he and his angels are suffered to do no more evil than to fulfill the purpose of the Holy One of Israel. The words "suffered" (Acts 13:18; 14:16), "permit" (Heb. 6:3), "endured" (Rom. 9:22), "Restrain" (Psalm 76:10), are scriptural, but when God is said to do so we may with certainty believe that it is the determinate counsel of God to permit, to restrain, to suffer, to

endure. Can any one believing that God is all-wise and almighty think otherwise? He is under no coercion, under no law of necessity. God is not necessitated; but the Holy One that inhabiteth eternity worketh all things after the counsel of his own will. Then I have thought, He has dominion over the wrath of man. "Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath thou shalt restrain" (Psalm 76:10). Then much more, will he not restrain, subdue my iniquities that make my life unhappy, over which I pray for relief and forgiveness? I think I can say he does. "God is able to subdue all things unto himself" (Phil. 3:21). Can he not suppress all the motions of sin in my Adamic nature? Could not God, who is, I hope, my Almighty Friend, so restrain my corrupt nature that during all the rest of the days of my earthly sojourn I should never have even one sinful thought? O, I have wished it might be so. Do you despise me because of my weakness, because I am frail, sinful, mutable? Look into the Psalms, and if you have a heart to hear and behold the tears and groans and prayers of the children of God because of their sins, because of their enemies, because of afflictions: Are you altogether a stranger to these things? O, if you have never tasted sin's bitterness how can you have tasted the Saviour's sweetness? What? Are all these internal exercises, these thoughts, intents of the heart, sinful emotions, gracious holy emotions, sighs, moans, self-loathings, tears, prayers, faith and hope, love and praise all predestinated? Yes, verily so, and none of it in isolation from the rest, it is all inseparably linked.

If the thoughts and intents of the heart, deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, the lustings of the flesh, in which there dwells no good thing, in number and measure

are not kept in bounds of and governed by God's decree according to the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, where would be the limit of the wickedness of the human heart? God hath set the bounds of all evil, visible and invisible of all mankind, and of devils, too. "Thou rulest the raging of the sea, when the waves thereof arise thou stillest them" (Psalm 89:9).

Having believed for over 55 years in God's predestination of all things whatsoever come to pass, shall I settle down upon any lees, and be at ease to be just a little sinful? Never! God forbid! I feel it is impossible. I have the comforting persuasion that according to the grace given me, in his kindness toward me in Christ Jesus, God hath so ordained and so wrought in my heart that my sinfulness shall be my burden while in this tabernacle. For God has so wrought me and in me that I have hope I am born of incorruptible seed, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever, and after the inward man, after the power of the life of this seed, of which I hope I am born I cannot have fellowship with, I cannot be in accord with the sins of my flesh. There is a warfare within. God hath, I hope, put his law in my inward parts, and written it in my mind, and this writing cannot be erased, but every pulsation of this new covenant heart throbs with it, and I desire, I hunger and thirst to be holy even as God is holy. "I delight in the law of God after the inward man: but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God: but with my flesh the law of sin" (Rom. 7:22-25).

How can I make light of sin when our loved Saviour in Gethsemane being in an agony his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground? The whole world lieth in wickedness, makes its bed, finds sweet pleasure and repose therein; but how can I? Rather let me weep in this dungeon house of clay. I am wretched in the bondage of this death, I am in pain and travail to be delivered, and the redemption draweth nigh. Are all the sighs and tears, and prayers of God's people in vain? I believe not, for I feel I know it is of the Lord who taught me thus to pray. He taught Israel, saying, "Take with you words, and turn to the Lord: and say unto him, "Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips" (Hosea 14:2). We are taught in the gospel to look to the cross of Christ, and there we see God's way and his power to save his people from their sins. And our comforted hearts embrace the revelation that our old man is crucified with Christ that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we shall not serve sin. This is the precious assurance: "Sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under the law, but under grace. God shall bruise Satan under our feet shortly, Christ, by the blood of his cross, hath made an end of sin. And though now, in some measure, we endure the bondage of corruption and groan and travail in pain for deliverance, the eternal excellency shall be ours. We taste the earnest of it now, for this is the decree, by the blood of the everlasting covenant; "The creature also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God." O blissful thought, the saints' earnest expectation! We are predestinated to be conformed to the image of his Son. Here all our prayers shall be answered. We shall be like Christ, for we shall

see him as he is; we shall bear the image of the heavenly. The decrees of Jehovah are his eternal purposes according to the counsel of his will, whereby, for his own glory, he hath ordained whatever comes to pass in his works of creation, providences and grace. If you are one in heart and soul with the church of Christ at Jerusalem, Acts 4:23.33, let us sing together:

“Keep silence all created things,
And wait your Maker’s nod.

My soul stands trembling, while she sings
The honors of our God.

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

Chained to His throne a volume lies,
With all the fates of men,
With every angel’s form and size,
Drawn by the eternal pen.

His providence unfolds the book,
And makes His counsels shine:
Each opening leaf, and every stroke,
Fulfills some deep design.

My God, I would not long to see
My fate with curious eyes;
What gloomy lines are writ for me,
Or what bright scenes may rise.

In thy fair book of life and grace,
O may I find my name
Recorded in some humble place,
Beneath my Lord the Lamb.”

(Isaac Watts)

—FREDERICK W. KEENE

WHY SAY “ABSOLUTE” PREDESTINATION?

C. C. Morris

While some say using the word *absolute* is unnecessary in referring to predestination, we rather delight in the use of it.

Elder Smoot, in his article on Absolute Predestination, published in the January-February 2011 issue of *The Remnant*, said:

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.

We agree entirely with Elder Smoot’s statement but wish to elaborate on it a bit. Surely the word predestination in itself means predestination that is absolute or without limit. Anything less is not predestination at all. A partial predestination would only be a proposal or wishful thinking.

Anyone involved in a construction trade knows that builders start with blueprints, architectural drawings, and plans. Those men in the trades know too that there are always “work orders” or on-the-job changes that must be issued because men’s intentions, based on their best wisdom, experience, and foresight, are nevertheless incomplete and fallible. Therefore their plans are always imperfect. This is why many of our brethren object to using the word *plan* in referring to God (such as “God’s *plan* of salvation” or “God *planned* that so-and-so would happen”). Jehovah did not *plan* for things to happen: “He spake, and

it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast (Psalm 33.9).” In this verse, leaving out the italicized word “*done*,” supplied in the King James Version, makes the text all the more emphatic: “**He spake, and it was;** He commanded, and it stood fast.”

We all know Missionaries, Conditionalists, and other free-willers (Arminians) who insist that they “believe in predestination,” but they know not whereof they speak. They only believe in predestination insofar as they are allowed to define the term. Their god has a *plan*, but his “predestination” is weighed down with depending on second causes and waiting for men to carry out his wishes. We have yet to meet such a person who does not believe and say that there are many things God wants to happen but it does not happen because some man does not do something God wants him to do, or he does something God does not want him to do. Such a god is no better off than an architect who must continually issue work-around work-orders because his first plan was shortsighted and flawed.

When we do not say “absolute” predestination, we are leaving the barn-door open for someone to steal our mule, and steal it they will, when we all, friend and foe alike, speak of plain old unembellished predestination. By our doing so, we have unnecessarily conceded to them something important. We have encouraged our hearers to think that predestination is less than it really is. Plainly, they do not mean the same thing we mean by the word. They, with all their incessant yammering, always informing us that “Predestination would make God (a) unjust, (b) the author of sin,” or (c) take your pick.

We become the losers; our enemies are the ones who gain ground by our giving up the territory once held by our spiritual forebears.

Our enemies? Yes. Isn’t that a little strong? No. They might otherwise be friends in nature, but they are enemies **for the truth’s sake**: “The elder unto the elect lady and her children, whom I love in the truth; and not I only, but also all they that have known the truth; **For the truth’s sake, which dwelleth in us, and shall be with us for ever** (2 John 1.1-2).” Their predestination is not our predestination, even as “**their rock is not as our Rock, even our enemies themselves being judges** (Deuteronomy 32.31).”

Saying “absolute predestination” will not necessarily win over the foes of the doctrine to your way of thinking. They must respect you for it, however, and friends of the truth will love you for it.

History is full of incidents where the people of God have revised their earlier terms they had used in order to clarify their doctrine and meaning. To name but two of these cases: When the Socinians (Unitarians) attacked the deity of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit’s equality with God the Father and God the Son, statements of faith were clarified to more clearly state our understanding of the Three-One God.

It is the same with **absolute** predestination. As long as free-willers left “predestination” alone, the word was *understood* to mean absolute predestination, the only genuine predestination there is. When they made enough trouble by challenging this fact and gained enough ground to cause worrisome questions to arise, many brethren added “absolute” to clarify what had previously been taken for granted. “For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you (1 Corinthians 11.19).” The introduction of heresies into the doctrine of Christ providentially gives occasion for saints to clarify the truth.—CCM

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We are assured that postal rates and mailing costs will only increase. We must ask \$3.00 *per book* for mailing costs, no exceptions. **This cost may increase again in the year 2012 to compensate for the U. S. Postal Service's rate increase, which is already here as of this writing (January, 2012).**

The chart on page 17 summarizes our sale prices.

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Our Lord said, "Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: **be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves** (Mathew 10.16)." —CCM

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We believe these principles are, in the main, harmonious with the articles of faith published by predestinarian associations and churches of the old order of Baptists known as Primitive, Particular, or Old School Baptists the world over.

1—The eternal existence, sovereignty, immutability, omnipotence, and perfections of Jehovah God; He has revealed Himself as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and these sacred Three are One; Jesus Christ was and is God manifest in the flesh, and in Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily;

2—The Old and New Testaments in their original languages are the verbally inspired word of God, and they are the complete and only valid guide of faith and practice; the King James Version is the preferred English translation;

3—The will of the eternal God is the first cause of all causes;

4—The absolute predestination of all things;

5—The eternal personal election of the redeemed in Christ, before the world began, and their eternal, vital union with Him; their number is fixed, certain, and sure, and can neither be increased nor diminished; their fall in

their federal head Adam into spiritual death, total depravity, and just condemnation; their utter inability to recover themselves from this fallen state;

6—The blood atonement and redemption by Jesus Christ are for the elect only, and are both efficacious and effectual in accomplishing the will and purpose of God to reconcile His people unto Himself;

7—The sovereign, irresistible, effectual work of the Holy Spirit in quickening the elect of God; the new birth is by the direct operation of the Holy Spirit without the use of any means;

8—The final preservation, perseverance, and eternal happiness of all the sons of God, by grace alone;

9—No works are good works other than those which God Himself has so designated; none of the works called good are left up to men to perform or not, at the creature's discretion; nor do the works of the creature, either before or after regeneration, result in merit accruing to his account in God's sight;

10—The peaceable fruits of righteousness are the certain result of God's working in His people both to will and to do of His good pleasure, and His people will be found walking in paths of righteousness for His name's sake;

11—The separation of church and state;

12—The principles outlined in the Black Rock Address of 1832;

13—The bodily resurrection, first of Christ, and also that of all the dead;

14—The final and eternal judgment; and,

15—The bliss of the redeemed and the torment of the wicked are both eternal and everlasting.