

## Chapter 6

# Predestination

Theological controversy over predestination has caused great confusion in the religious lives of many people. Let us begin by examining the source of this controversy.

In the Bible, we find many passages which are often interpreted to mean that everything in an individual's life—prosperity and decline, happiness and misery, salvation and damnation, as well as the rise and fall of nations—comes to pass exactly as predestined by God. For example, St. Paul wrote:

Those whom He predestined He also called; and those whom He called He also justified; and those whom He justified He also glorified.  
—*Rom. 8:30*

“I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.” So it depends not upon man's will or exertion, but upon God's mercy. —*Rom. 9:15-16*

Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for beauty and another for menial use? —*Rom. 9:21*

It is also written that, even while they were still in their mother's womb, God loved Jacob and hated Esau and announced their destiny, saying, “the elder will serve the younger.”<sup>1</sup> Thus, there are ample biblical

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1. Rom. 9:11-13

grounds to justify the doctrine of God's absolute and complete predestination.

Yet we can also find sufficient evidence in the Bible to refute the doctrine of absolute predestination. For example, God warned the first human ancestors not to eat of the fruit in order to prevent their Fall.<sup>2</sup> We can deduce from this that the human Fall was not the outcome of God's predestination, but rather the result of man's disobedience to God's commandment. Again we read, "the Lord was sorry that he had made man on the earth and it grieved him to his heart."<sup>3</sup> If the human Fall were predestined by God, there would be no reason for Him to grieve over fallen human beings, who were acting in accordance with His predestination. Moreover, it is written in the Gospel of John that whoever believes in Christ shall not perish, but have eternal life,<sup>4</sup> implying that no one is predestined to damnation.

The doctrine that the outcome of human undertakings is determined not by God's predestination, but instead by human effort, is supported by the well-known biblical verse, "Ask, and it will be given you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you."<sup>5</sup> If every human undertaking were to turn out as God had predestined, why did Jesus emphasize the need for human effort? The Bible instructs us to pray for our sick brothers,<sup>6</sup> suggesting that illness and health do not depend solely on God's predestination. If everything were determined by inevitable fate, as predestined by God, our tearful supplications would be to no avail.

We would expect that since God is absolute, when He has predestined something, it is fixed absolutely and cannot be altered by human effort. Therefore, if we accept the traditional doctrine that all things are absolutely predestined by God, then we have to conclude that no human endeavor, including prayer, evangelism or charity, can add anything more to God's providence of restoration. Any extra effort beyond the natural course of events would be completely useless.

Since there are ample grounds in the Bible to justify either of these two contrasting doctrines, controversy over the issue of predestination has been inevitable. How can the Principle solve this problem? We will consider the question of predestination by analyzing it under several topics.

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2. Gen. 2:17

3. Gen. 6:6

4. John 3:16

5. Matt. 7:7

6. James 5:14-15

## SECTION 1

## THE PREDESTINATION OF GOD'S WILL

Before discussing the predestination of God's Will, let us first examine what is being willed. Let us remember: God could not accomplish His purpose of creation due to the human Fall. Accordingly, God's Will in carrying out His providence for fallen humanity is still to accomplish the purpose of creation. In this sense, God's Will is that restoration be accomplished.

Next, we should know that God predetermines His Will before He works toward its fulfillment. God determined when He created human beings that they accomplish the purpose of creation. When God could not fulfill His Will due to the Fall, He determined to fulfill His Will once more through the providence of restoration and since then has worked to accomplish it.

God must predestine His Will and bring about its realization in the ways of goodness, and not in the ways of evil. God is the Author of goodness. Hence, His purpose of creation is good; likewise, the purpose of the providence of restoration and His Will to accomplish its purpose are good. For this reason, God does not intend anything that obstructs or opposes the fulfillment of the purpose of creation. In particular, He could not have predestined the human Fall or sins which make fallen human beings liable to judgment. Nor could He predestine such events as the destruction of the cosmos. If such evils were the inevitable result of God's predestination, then God could not be the Author of goodness. Moreover, if God Himself had predestined such evil outcomes, He would not have expressed regret over them as He did, for example, over the depravity of fallen human beings,<sup>7</sup> or over King Saul when he lapsed into faithlessness.<sup>8</sup> Such verses illustrate that evil is not the result of God's predestination, but rather is the result of human beings failing to fulfill their responsibility and instead joining hands with Satan.

To what extent does God predestine His Will—the ultimate accomplishment of the purpose of creation? God is the absolute Being, unique, eternal and unchanging; therefore, the purpose of His creation must also be absolute, unique, eternal and unchanging. Likewise, His Will for the providence of restoration, the goal of which is the accomplishment of the purpose of creation, must also be absolute, unique and unchanging. It follows that God's predestination of His Will—that the purpose of creation one day be fulfilled—must also be absolute, as it is written,

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7. Gen. 6:6

8. I Sam. 15:11

“I have spoken, and I will bring it to pass; I have purposed, and I will do it.”<sup>9</sup> Since God predestines His Will absolutely, if the person who has been chosen to accomplish His Will fails, God must continue to carry on His providence until its fulfillment, even though it may require Him to choose another person to shoulder the mission.

For example, God willed that His purpose of creation be fulfilled through Adam. Although this did not come to pass, God’s predestination of this providential Will has remained absolute. Hence, God sent Jesus as the second Adam and attempted to fulfill the Will through him. When Jesus also could not bring about the complete fulfillment of the Will due to the disbelief of the Jewish people,<sup>10</sup> he promised he would return and fulfill it without fail.<sup>11</sup> Likewise, God’s Will was to establish the family foundation for the Messiah through the dispensation based on Cain and Abel. When Cain killed Abel and this Will was not fulfilled, God made another attempt to fulfill it through Noah’s family. When Noah’s family also failed to fulfill the Will, God chose Abraham as yet another replacement and worked through him. We also see this with respect to the missions of individuals: God tried to remedy the failure to fulfill His Will through Abel by choosing Seth as his replacement.<sup>12</sup> God tried to fulfill His Will left unaccomplished by Moses by choosing Joshua in his stead.<sup>13</sup> When God’s Will for Judas Iscariot was nullified by his betrayal of Jesus, God made a second attempt to fulfill this Will by electing Matthias in his place.<sup>14</sup>

## SECTION 2

### THE PREDESTINATION OF THE WAY IN WHICH GOD’S WILL IS FULFILLED

According to the Principle of Creation, God’s purpose of creation can be realized only when human beings complete their portion of responsibility.<sup>15</sup> Although God’s Will to realize this purpose through the providence of restoration is absolute and beyond human influence, its fulfillment necessarily requires the accomplishment of the human portion of responsibility. Originally, God’s purpose of creation was to be fulfilled through Adam and Eve only when they completed their given responsibility and refrained from eating the fruit of the tree of the

9. Isa. 46:11

10. cf. Messiah 1.2

11. Matt. 16:27

12. Gen. 4.25

13. Josh. 1:5

14. Acts 1:24-26

15. cf. Creation 5.2.2

knowledge of good and evil.<sup>16</sup> Similarly, in the providence of restoration, God's Will is accomplished only when the central figure responsible for a mission completes his portion of responsibility. For example, the Jewish people, as the central nation of the providence, should have believed in Jesus and followed him unconditionally in order for God to accomplish complete salvation at that time. Because they disbelieved and failed to fulfill their responsibility, the fulfillment of the Will had to be postponed until the time of the Second Advent.

To what extent does God predestine the unfolding of the events in the providence? Although God's Will to realize the purpose of the providence of restoration is absolute, God predestines the process of its accomplishment conditionally, contingent upon the five percent responsibility of the central figure, which must be completed in addition to the ninety-five percent responsibility of God. The proportion of five percent is used to indicate that the human portion of responsibility is extremely small when compared to God's portion of responsibility. Yet for human beings, this five percent is equivalent to one hundred percent of our effort.

To cite some examples: God predestined that His Will be fulfilled through Adam and Eve only when they refrained from eating the fruit and completed their responsibility. In the dispensation of restoration through Noah, God predestined that His Will be fulfilled only after Noah completed his responsibility by exerting himself with the utmost devotion in building the ark. In the providence of salvation through Jesus, God predestined that His Will be fulfilled only after fallen people completed their responsibility by believing in Jesus as the Messiah and rendering him devoted service.<sup>17</sup> However, time and again human beings could not cope with even their small portion of responsibility. Consequently, God's providence has been repeatedly prolonged.

It is written in the Bible, "The prayer of faith will save the sick man,"<sup>18</sup> "Your faith has made you well,"<sup>19</sup> and "For every one who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened."<sup>20</sup> These verses confirm that God predestines His Will to be fulfilled contingent upon human beings' completing their portion of responsibility. We should recognize from these examples how minuscule the human portion of responsibility is in comparison to God's toil and grace, which is His por-

16. Gen. 2:17

17. John 3:16

18. James 5:15

19. Mark 5:34

20. Matt. 7:8

tion of responsibility. On the other hand, when we consider the fact that over and over again central figures in the providence could not cope with their responsibility, we can appreciate how extremely difficult it was for them to fulfill even this comparatively small portion.

### SECTION 3

#### THE PREDESTINATION OF HUMAN BEINGS

Adam and Eve were to become the good ancestors of humanity, conditional upon fulfilling their responsibility to obey God's commandment not to eat of the fruit. Accordingly, God did not absolutely predestine that Adam and Eve would become our good ancestors. The same holds for all fallen people: they can become the ideal people God has foreordained them to be only when they complete their responsibility. Therefore, God does not predestine in absolute terms what kind of people they actually turn out to be.

To what extent does God determine the fate of an individual? The fulfillment of God's Will through an individual absolutely requires that he complete his responsibility. Hence, even though God predestines someone for a particular mission, God's ninety-five percent responsibility and the person's five percent responsibility must be accomplished together before the person can complete his given mission and fulfill God's Will. If the person does not complete his responsibility, he cannot become the person God has purposed him to be.

For example, when God chose Moses, He predestined conditionally that when Moses fulfilled his responsibility, he would lead the chosen people into the blessed land of Canaan.<sup>21</sup> However, when Moses transgressed God's Will by striking the rock twice at Kadesh-barnea, he failed. Consequently, Moses died before reaching his final destination, and God's intention for him to lead the people into Canaan was not realized.<sup>22</sup> When God chose Judas Iscariot, He conditionally predestined that Judas would remain a loyal disciple of Jesus by faithfully completing his responsibility. Yet when Judas turned faithless, God's expectation for him was not realized, and he ended up a traitor. When God raised up the Jewish people, God predestined that they would be glorified as the chosen nation when they fulfilled their responsibility to believe in and attend Jesus. However, when their leaders sent Jesus to the cross, this preordained destiny was not brought to pass, and the Jewish nation was scattered.

21. Exod. 3:10

22. Num. 20:2-13; 27:13-14

Let us next examine God's predestination of central figures in the providence of restoration. The purpose of God's providence of restoration is to restore completely the fallen world to the original world which God intended. Therefore, although the times of their salvation may differ, all fallen people are predestined to be saved.<sup>23</sup> Yet, as was the case with God's creation, His providence of salvation—a work of re-creation—cannot be completed in an instant. It begins from one point and gradually expands to cover the whole. Therefore, in the providence of salvation, God first predestines one person to be the *central figure* and then calls him to a mission.

What qualifications should the person possess to merit such a calling? First, the central figure must be born into the chosen people. Next, even among the chosen people, he must come from an ancestral line with many good accomplishments. Among the descendants of this outstanding lineage, he must be endowed with the requisite character. Among those with the requisite character, he must develop the necessary qualities during his early life. Finally, among those who have acquired these qualities, God selects first the individual who lives in a time and place most fitting to His need.

## SECTION 4

### ELUCIDATION OF BIBLICAL VERSES WHICH SUPPORT THE DOCTRINE OF ABSOLUTE PREDESTINATION

So far, we have analyzed the various issues concerning predestination. Next, we shall look again at those biblical verses which seem to suggest that the outcome of every undertaking is determined by God's absolute predestination and elucidate their meaning.

Let us begin with the following verse:

For those whom He foreknew He also predestined . . . those whom He predestined He also called; and those whom He called He also justified; and those whom He justified He also glorified. —*Rom. 8:29-30*

God, being omniscient, foreknows who has the qualifications necessary to become a central figure in the providence of restoration. God predestines those whom He foreknows; then He calls upon them to fulfill the purpose of the providence. Calling a person is God's responsibility, but that alone does not entitle the person to be justified before God and

23. II Pet. 3:9

given glory. Only when the person completes his responsibility after being called by God is he justified and then glorified. God's predestination concerning an individual's glorification is thus contingent upon the completion of his portion of responsibility. Because the biblical verse does not mention the human portion of responsibility, people may misinterpret it to mean that all affairs are determined solely by God's absolute predestination.

It is written,

"I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion." So it depends not upon man's will or exertion, but upon God's mercy. —*Rom. 9:15-16*

As was explained above, only God foreknows and chooses who is most suitable to fulfill the purpose of the providence of restoration. It is God's right to choose a person and have mercy or compassion on him; this depends not at all upon human will or human effort. This verse was written to emphasize the power and grace of God.

Paul also wrote,

Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for beauty and another for menial use? —*Rom. 9:21*

It has been explained that God gave human beings a portion of responsibility as the condition based on which He could love them more than any other being in creation. God's intention in giving this condition was to make them worthy to be the lords of creation by having them take after His creative nature. Yet human beings themselves violated this condition and fell. They have become like refuse, fit to be discarded. In such a state, fallen people have no cause to complain, no matter how God may treat them. This is what this verse teaches us.

It is written that God loved Jacob and hated Esau even when they were still inside their mother's womb and had not done anything good or evil. God favored one and disfavored the other and told Rebecca that "the elder will serve the younger."<sup>24</sup> What was the reason for this favoritism? God favored one over the other in order to set up a certain course in the providence of restoration. Although further details will be discussed below,<sup>25</sup> God gave Isaac twin sons, Esau and Jacob, with the intention of having them stand in the positions of Cain and Abel. They were to make the conditions of indemnity necessary for accomplishing

24. Rom. 9:10-13

25. cf. Foundation 3.2

His Will to recover the birthright of the elder brother, which was lost when Cain killed Abel in Adam's family. God intended to realize this Will by having Jacob (in the position of Abel) win over his elder brother Esau (in the position of Cain). Since Esau was in the position of Cain, he was "hated" by God. Since Jacob was in the position of Abel, he could receive God's love.

Nevertheless, whether God would in the end favor or disfavor them depended on whether or not they completed their given portions of responsibility. In fact, because Esau obediently submitted to Jacob, he was able to rise above his previous condition of being hated by God and receive the blessing of God's love equal to Jacob's. Conversely, even though Jacob was initially in the position to receive God's favor, he would have ceased to receive it had he failed in his responsibility.

People such as John Calvin have propounded the doctrine of absolute and complete predestination, which is widely believed even in our present day. They have held to such a doctrine because they wrongly believed that the accomplishment of God's Will depends solely on the power and work of God. They were ignorant of the true relationship between God's portion of responsibility and the human portion of responsibility in the fulfillment of the purpose of the providence of restoration.