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Predestination

UNLIKE SUBSTANCE, hypostasis, Trinity and persona, non-biblical terms used by historic Christian theology to describe the nature of God, the scriptures clearly use the word predestination to explain the relationship of God and man. Borrowing from Paul and Augustine, John Calvin became the foremost Protestant expositor of predestination and bequeathed a system based on it to subsequent generations. Many have felt that this idea of predestination provides the core of Calvinist theology. Everything else revolves around it: the meaning of providence, the sovereignty of God, divine election and the divine majesty.

In contrast to other Christian theologians who made predestination an adjunct to their systems, Calvin focused upon it as a key to everything else. Augustine, for example, was literally forced into his extreme position on this subject during a long and drawn out controversy with the British monk Pelagius and his disciples. Calvin, however, started where the North African bishop left off and assumed that the Augustinian explanation was the only scriptural one. The Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches

held Augustine in high esteem but never accepted his conclusions in toto. Beginning with Arminius, a Dutch theologian from Leiden, Protestants too started to question the Calvinist position. Most Anglicans, in spite of a Calvinist orientation to the Thirty-nine Articles, sided with Arminius rather than the Genevan Reformer. All Methodists took a stand with the Dutch theologian except for the minority who followed Whitefield and the Countess of Huntington. Congregationalists remained Calvinists until they were influenced by the evangelistic theology of Charles G. Finney or went Modernist after the decline of the Edwardian school. Even some Presbyterians once solidly in the Genevan camp now prefer to tone down the doctrine of predestination and are at best semi-Calvinists. In general one may say that Calvin failed to convert the Church at large to his view and has far fewer ardent disciples now than he did in 1600, 1700 or 1800.

The Genevan theologian made his position crystal clear, as one can see by examining the relevant sections of *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*.¹ He frankly admitted that divine election and predestination give rise to difficult questions; nothing seems more unreasonable than some men being predestined by God to salvation and the rest to destruction. Calvin puts emphasis on the absolute freedom of God. Because God is free to do as He pleases, He can save some and damn others.

Calvin refuses to accept the common argument that God predestines the fate of every individual because He knows beforehand that certain men will turn out to be good and the rest will prefer evil. The omnipotence of God is not dependent on His omniscience. In His knowledge all things are present; although from our standpoint they occurred in the past or will take place in the future. But God's eternal plan for each individual is founded on His gratuitous mercy, totally irrespective of human merit. He foreordains some to eternal life and the remainder to eternal damnation, yet not because He knows His adopted children will de-

¹ A convenient abridgment of Calvin's view on predestination can be found in Hugh T. Kerr, *A Compend of the Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1964, pp. 127-140, 147-150.

serve His grace while the non-elect will be inclined to wickedness. Any consideration of merit is precluded because the choice was made before the foundation of the world.

When some complain that God has no right to be angry with His creatures before they have provoked Him with actual offenses, Calvin asserts that God does not act with the caprice of a tyrant but rather like a fair judge. The will of God is the highest rule of justice. Everything He wills must be considered just for the very reason that He wills it. However, the reason of divine justice is too exalted to be measured by any human standard.

How can man be blamed for the faults rendered inevitable by the act of his predestination? If God created man to do whatever he later does, he ought not to be judged guilty for things he cannot avoid. Calvin replies to this objection that all things are at God's disposal to do with as He alone sees fit. Evil men cannot avoid the necessity of sinning but God's actions are guided by an indubitably certain equity unknown to us. Man's misery is derived from himself not from God. What this last assertion means in light of the absolute providence of God one has no way of knowing.

Calvin denies that God is any respecter of persons. Man by himself has nothing to attract the favor of God. His selection of one man and rejection of another proceeds solely from divine mercy. God may freely display and exert His grace wherever and whenever He pleases. In a famous sentence the Genevan theologian declares, "But when we come to election, we see mercy on every side. . . ."²

Does not predestination undercut moral striving? Why worry about doing good or evil if one's destiny is already determined before the foundation of the world? Calvin and his followers have been noted for their zeal for civic righteousness and personal rectitude. In fact, Puritanism was a decidedly Calvinist movement which made major contributions to representative government, social reform and the creation of the bourgeois ethic. The Genevan theologian himself merely argued that the end proposed by divine

² Kerr, *Ibid*, p. 135 (Institutes III, 24:1).

election is our diligent performance of virtuous actions. Since the object of election is holiness of life, it should awaken and stimulate us to a cheerful practice of righteous conduct. Because we believe we are the chosen of God, we will act like it.

Calvin also opposes the common notion that man is a cooperator with God. This he feels, implies that the validity of God's election depends on the consent of man. To think so makes the will of man superior to the counsel of God. One would ordinarily doubt the logic of Calvin's conclusion. Why must a partnership between God and man suggest that the junior partner is superior to the senior? Calvin probably means that if man is free to accept or reject divine election, he has the power to frustrate the intent of God. That is, if man has any part, however small, in the fulfillment of the divine program the freedom, authority and omnipotence of God is limited. Any such idea would horrify the Genevan theologian.

Calvin intended his theology to comfort and strengthen Christian believers. On the other hand, however, if he were certain that God predestined some to eternal salvation, he was equally sure that others were predestined for eternal damnation. No one can avoid the inevitable working out of the divine decree, however much he might pray or do good. This notion of reprobation, it has been claimed, troubled Calvin right up to his death. Nevertheless, logic and scripture pushed him to the most extreme form of the double predestination doctrine:

Now as no description can equal the severity of the Divine vengeance on the reprobate, their anguish and torment are figuratively represented to us under corporeal images; as. . . gnashing of teeth. . . . For there can be no doubt but that, by such modes of expression, the Holy Spirit intended to confound all our faculties with horror. . . .³

³ Calvin, *Institutes*, III, xxv, 12.

Calvin's *Institutes* provided a systematic theology for Protestants of the Reformation period and later was of enormous power and influence. It is interesting to see what a theologian like Paul Tillich, for example, thinks of it now. Unlike many earlier commentators, Tillich contends that the doctrine of predestination is not the main point of Calvinism. As he points out, predestination was not even developed in the first edition of *The Institutes*. For Tillich the central doctrine of Calvinist Christianity was the majesty of God. According to Tillich, Calvin provides a premature warning against the deist view of God. Deism wants to keep God at a proper distance from us. Calvin's God is continually involved in the world. Everything depends upon Him in the most literal and thorough-going sense.

For Tillich, Calvin thought of predestination as providence applied to mankind's ultimate aim. If we carry our belief in providence to its logical conclusion we end up with a doctrine of predestination. If we think that God is really in control of the universe, we must sooner or later confess that He is in control in every way. There is no half way point. In this sense Tillich points out that those who oppose predestination views are adherents of a moralistic interpretation of Christianity rather than a religious one. For this reason, Isaiah, Paul, Augustine and Luther believe in predestination.⁴ Tillich even adds Jesus to the list, though many would find that questionable.

Tillich also argues that predestination is based on a certain type of empirical evidence. There is a selective instead of an equalitarian principle operative in human experience. In the most literal manner many may be called but few are chosen. However, double predestination bothers Tillich: for him if something is created by divine love it cannot be eternally condemned.⁵ Calvin

⁴ Does Tillich really mean that to believe in predestination makes one more religious than to believe in free will? Such a conclusion flies in the face of the facts of Christian history. Was George Whitefield more religious than the Wesleys? Are the Calvinistic Baptists less moralistic than the Freewill Baptists?

⁵ Paul Tillich, *A History of Christian Thought*, Simon & Schuster, N.Y., 1972, pp. 262-275.

had remarkably little to say about the love of God; divine glory seems to be his primary concern. When Calvin does speak of God's love it is limited to His feeling for the elect; there is no universal love in Calvin's doctrine of God.

ARMINIUS AND THE REMONSTRANTS

John Calvin won many adherents to his cause in the Netherlands, in part because of the logic by which he silenced opponents, in part because his moral earnestness appealed to the powerful burgher and bourgeois class. The Dutch Reformed Church became and has remained a stronghold for Calvinist theology. But the nation also had a vital mystical tradition and a rational bent which inevitably produced a reaction against Calvinism when it became authoritarian and somewhat rigid. It was not surprising therefore when Jacob Arminius, a professor of theology at the University of Leiden, raised serious objections to the Genevan doctrine of predestination. Out of this protest was born the Remonstrant Brotherhood, a small fellowship of ministers and churches whose influence has always been far greater than the number of its members might indicate.

Arminius and his followers considered supralapsarian and infralapsarian interpretations of predestination but rejected both. The supralapsarians argued that from all eternity God decreed the election of some and reprobation of the rest, but His decision was in no way determined by the Fall of man. Infralapsarians agreed that predestination was decided upon from all eternity but that God made His decision because He knew the Fall of Adam would take place. The former was a way of insisting with Calvin that God acted freely and was in no manner influenced by the question of human merit. To make God's plan conditioned by the future deeds of men would limit His sovereign freedom and deny His absolute majesty. The latter opinion tried to protect the morality of God by providing an ethical rationale for predestination. He acted in the light of Adam's rebellion and sin which He knew would occur.

Arminius and the Remonstrants refused to accept either the

supralapsarian doctrine or its infralapsarian variation. For them, divine decree refers solely to the overall plan of God. It does not predict the fate of any individual. God decided that man would be saved through faith in Christ. In any specific case, a man determines his own destiny by whether he allies himself with Christ or rejects him. Such a view preserves both God's final control over creation and man's free will in regard to his eternal future, the Arminians contended.

On another issue the Calvinists and the Leiden professor disagreed. Consistent Calvinists held that since God from all eternity had chosen His elect, Christ lived and died for them alone. What could Christ possibly do for the non-elect whose damnation had been made certain by eternal decree? Christ died for sinners, it is true, but only those whom God had freely predestined for heavenly bliss. Arminians argued that Christ died for all men even though each individual must decide for himself to accept or refuse salvation. Forgiveness guaranteed by the redemptive act of Christ became effective when one became of his own free will a believer.

At a third point the orthodox Calvinists maintained the absolute authority of God by claiming that a man could not refuse the free gift of salvation if it were offered to him. To do so would frustrate the divine will. Man cannot oppose God so he cannot reject election as one of God's chosen. Arminians naturally complained that this would make man a puppet rather than a human being.

Finally, can a man chosen by God ever lose the divine grace by which he is guaranteed eternal salvation? Naturally, the Calvinists insisted that one could not fall from grace. As he could not deny the gift God offered, once accepted it could not be thrown away. Once saved, forever saved. Arminians hedged a little, asking for time to study the matter in light of scripture. Tentatively, they were inclined to believe that a man could fall from grace. Any other conclusion would be a denial of man's power of self-determination.⁶

⁶ J. Dillenberger & C. Welch, *Protestant Christianity*, Chas. Scribner's Sons, N.Y., 1954, pp. 90-94.

When the Calvinists were unable to persuade the Arminians by quoting scripture and appealing to logic, they resorted to more effective methods. The Synod of Dort was convened in 1618 for the sole purpose of silencing the Remonstrant dissidents. Jan van Oldenbarneveltdt, a statesman favoring Arminius, was beheaded and Hugo Grotius, the famous jurist, was condemned to life imprisonment (partly, it is true, on political grounds). Ordinary Remonstrants were banished until 1625 and their brotherhood was not legalized until 1795. Inside Holland Arminian views were limited to a small minority. In Great Britain they were championed by Archbishop Laud and later even more openly by the Wesleys.⁷

In her book defending the Reformed doctrine of predestination, Professor Loraine Boettner of Pikerville College carefully listed the objections commonly urged against it:

1. That it is fatalistic,
2. It is inconsistent with man's free will and moral responsibility,
3. God becomes the Author of sin,
4. Predestination discourages all motives to exertion,
5. God is unjustly partial,
6. Predestination is unfavorable to morality,
7. It precludes a sincere offer of the Gospel to the non-elect,
8. It contradicts the universalistic passages in the Bible.⁸

Arminians raised each of these points but were outvoted at the Synod of Dort.

VARIOUS MODERN OPINIONS

Because of its doctrine of predestination and its concept of the arbitrary authority of God, Calvinism has obtained a very mixed reception during the past three centuries. While some have praised its consistent respect for the overwhelming majesty of God, probably a far greater number have revolted against its ultrapessimistic

⁷ W. Walker, *A History of the Christian Church*, (revised edition), Chas. Scribner's Sons, N.Y., 1959, pp. 399-401.

⁸ L. Boettner, *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1932.

estimate of human nature, its implied denial of human freedom and its virtual abandonment of the ultimate grounds for ethical endeavor. All of these charges have been questioned and are often dismissed as unfair. Nevertheless the charges persist, continue to plague defenders of Calvinism in general and discredit the notion of predestination in particular. As Dr. George A. Gordon, the Boston theologian and pastor of Old South Church, exclaimed, "If Calvin is right, his God is our devil."⁹

Eastern Orthodox Christianity from the beginning had its doubts about the adequacy of Augustinianism, especially such controversial features as double predestination. When Pelagius ran into trouble in the Western Church he went East where he received the protection of Patriarch John of Jerusalem. In a similar situation a follower of Pelagius found an understanding friend in the eminent theologian, Bishop Theodore of Mopsuestia.

If one really believes in Incarnational theology, as the Orthodox Churches have, human nature is glorified rather than being defamed in the fashion of Augustine or the Genevan Reformer. Hence, it is not surprising to read in one of the books of Nicolai Berdyaev, "Calvin's horrible doctrine has the great merit of being a *reductio ad absurdum*."¹⁰

Berdyaev believed that Calvin began with false presuppositions, thus demonstrating the religious inadequacy of Christian orthodoxy by extending them to their logical absurdity. This points to the end of a theology of monarchic monotheism and a recognition of tragedy within the divine life. Calvin's absolute monarch concept of God must be replaced with the God of sacrificial love.¹¹

Karl Barth has long been regarded as the father of Neo-orthodox theology and the foremost modern representative of neo-Reformation thought. The unwary might therefore assume that he does little more than refurbish the main ideas of Luther and Calvin. Nothing could be further from the truth.

⁹ Gordon, a well-known Congregational theologian, summed up his thought in *Ultimate Conceptions of Faith*, Houghton Mifflin, Boston, 1903.

¹⁰ N. Berdyaev, *The Destiny of Man*, Harper Torchbook, N.Y., 1960, p. 24.

¹¹ Berdyaev, *Ibid*, pp. 23-35.

According to the Basle theologian, predestination primarily means that God freely and graciously decided before the creation to unite Himself with man in the person of Christ and through him with all the people he represents. God elected Himself to fellowship with man and elected (predestined) man to fellowship with Him. From all eternity He is the Electing God. God does not simply predestine mankind. More importantly He predestines Himself. God resolved once and for all to determine Himself in Christ for sinful man and sinful man for Himself. In the overflow of His love and freedom of His grace, He determined to be gracious toward man even though man would rebel against Him.

Barth complains that Calvin concentrated on the election of individuals in his doctrine of predestination whereas he should have focused his thought on the first concern of God which is the divine election of Christ. He is the Chosen. Others are elected in him, through him and because of him. In Christ the real meaning of God's election is revealed. Christ represents the eternal resolve of God to fellowship with man. In him, God's faithful covenant-partner, man can fulfill God's eternal plan.

Creation has for Barth the indelible character of the divine blessing. Evil therefore should not be conceived of as a power which has an independent existence. Barth coined the term *das Nichtige* (the Nihil) to express the ultimate powerlessness of evil. Since God can only create what is in conformity with His own nature, evil is the non-real. It can be called "the impossible possibility" because even if it exists it is excluded from the divine work of creation. Christ represents God's fore-ordained triumph over *das Nichtige*. Barth accepts the dreadful reality of evil, but insists that it is ontologically impossible.

God tolerates *das Nichtige* temporarily, we are told, to safeguard man's autonomy and freedom. Man must respond voluntarily to God's grace. This inevitably entails the risk of man's falling away from God. Salvation comes to a humanity situated at the very edge of an abyss. On the basis of such an interpretation of human nature and divine grace Barth assures us that we can escape from the false pessimism of Schopenhauer and the erroneous

optimism of Leibnitz.¹²

In America, the intellectual and moral repudiation of Calvinism began in the middle of the 18th century. Before that time in the Congregational Churches of New England and the Presbyterian Churches further south, Calvinism was taught in the colleges and preached from the pulpits. The Unitarian movement in the Boston area spread among the ministerial graduates of Harvard provoking civil war in the Congregational Churches and finally resulted in open schism. Unitarians did not try to hide their opposition to Calvinism and all it stood for. From within the Baptist Churches Universalism was born and it too was anti-Calvinist on principle. By the middle of the last century the Congregationalists as a whole had lost their enthusiasm for Calvin and by 1900 were openly denouncing him.

Quite typical of clerical opinion in the big city churches were the views of Dr. Washington Gladden of First Congregational Church in Columbus, Ohio. In a book published in 1899 he explained that the doctrine of unconditional election and reprobation was no longer palatable to educated Christians of any denomination. Modern theology, he claimed, is based on the righteousness and love of God—not upon His sovereignty. Whereas the central idea of Augustine and Calvin is force, the central idea of modern theology is righteousness. The fundamental explanation of everything is now God's character rather than His will. The old un-moral theology has been replaced by a moral one, Gladden declared.

The Congregationalist theologian stabbed the predestinationist at the weakest point in his armor: the damnation of infants. Why hesitate to speak of this quite openly? he asked sarcastically. It is of the very substance of election doctrine that every non-elect individual is damned from earliest infancy. There was never for one moment the slightest possibility for him to escape eternal doom. The most merciful thing that could possibly happen would be to send him straight to hell from his mother's

¹² Herbert Hartwell, *The Theology of Karl Barth*, Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1964, pp. 105-112.

arms. The sooner he is removed from our world the lighter will be the burden of his everlasting torment. The longer the child lives the more he sins and the more terrible his punishment. The non-elect sent to hell as infants are therefore the most mercifully treated of all the damned.

According to Gladden,

The whole grim, ghastly, appalling fabrication is built upon a deification of will. The central element of personality, men said, is the will. God's will must then be the foundation of theology. Take the principle of will, make it omnipotent and absolute, subordinate to it every other element of character, then deduce your theology from that principle, and you will have the Augustinian Calvinism.¹³

Summarizing what is wrong with the doctrine of predestination, the Ohio pastor wrote,

The greatest fact in the creation of God is a fact of which this old philosophy never gained any adequate conception—it is the creation of a free human personality. . . . Having endowed man with freedom, God respects the work of his hands—let me rather say the offspring of his love; force is forever laid aside in appeals to his personality. The claims of reason, the impulses of affection, the dictates of righteousness, are the only powers that can rightly control his action. He is made for virtue, and there is no virtue where there is constraint. The kind of compulsion which the irresistible grace of the old theology assumed is a moral absurdity.¹⁴

¹³ W. Gladden, *How Much is Left of the Old Doctrines?*, Houghton Mifflin, Boston, 1899, p. 213.

¹⁴ W. Gladden, *Ibid.*, p. 217. Cf. the remark of George A. Gordon, "Predestination expresses the relation of the Absolute will to the universe and to mankind. But the Absolute will is absolute in goodness. . . . The derivation from this will of absolute goodness of two decrees, one of salvation for a certain portion of mankind, and another of reprobation for the rest of the human race, is a supreme instance of bad logic." *Op. cit.*, p. 126.

Calvin would have a difficult task today if he tried to gain approval of his predestination views in a general assembly of the World Council of Churches, but the debate continues between the Genevan preacher and the Leiden professor. The doctrine of election is far from a dead issue in contemporary theology even if the Calvinist formulation of it has been driven from some of its former fortresses of churchly power. Albert Einstein once remarked, "God always plays with loaded dice." Calvinism represents one of the most impressive elucidations of the epigram when infused with religious power and argued with consistent logic.

As recent as 1960 Professor Berkouwer of Amsterdam, an exceedingly learned theologian, published a book-length explication and defense of the doctrine of election which deviated not the slightest from Calvin and the 17th century Synod of Dort. He vigorously protests against willful and unintentional caricatures of Calvinism made by friends as well as foes. He admits predestination is a hard doctrine, but he holds that it is found in scripture. He points out that for Paul, Augustine and Calvin predestination was considered a comforting belief illustrating the gracious mercy of God toward His elect, and that it need not necessarily lead to fatalism, anxiety or immorality. But neither should it turn election into a reason for pride or pretentiousness.¹⁵

DIVINE PROMISE AND HUMAN DESTINY

All Christian theologians, whatever their major or minor differences, agree that God is good and His purpose of creation is beneficial to man. In other words, the basic structure of the universe is neither hostile to human aspirations nor merely neutral in regard to human happiness. Unification theology therefore concludes with Berdyaev, Gladden, Barth and others that God never predestines anyone to fall from grace or perish or be eternally damned. What God preordains is His final plan for the restoration of mankind. He is determined to fulfill the purpose of creation; we are assured that His programme will be carried out. In this sense,

¹⁵ G.C. Berkouwer, *Divine Election*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1960.

God's sovereignty will be finally exercised in His world. The universe as a whole has a teleological character and history is filled with purposiveness. Predestination applies to the overall plan of God. It reflects His grand strategy.

To manifest this, God chooses and calls specific individuals. They become His elect, chosen to fulfill missions related to the dispensation of restoration. They are no longer persons preoccupied with their private search for happiness; through the process of divine election they become instruments of destiny. Moses, Isaiah, Jesus are illustrations of men so called.

However, we should not think of them as superhuman. They are men like ourselves. To designate them for a specific mission, God takes into account their ancestral background, their spiritual heritage, their intrinsic character and their potential. Further, He considers their heredity and environment before summoning them. Those He calls are equipped to be of value to Him. And as they fulfill their designated missions, He justifies and glorifies them.

The doctrine of election refers to such special instruments of the divine purpose. It is not intended to apply to man en masse or every individual. While God is interested in everybody because all men are created to be His children, He is particularly concerned with those who can play a direct role in the plan of restoration, and open the way for others. The doctrine of election was originally designed to highlight this fact.

God calls a man to work with Him. The responsibility for carrying out the task of restoration, we might say, is divided between them. Each depends on the other, requires the other. Man and God must serve as working partners, according to *Divine Principle*. Only when man fully cooperates with God can His will be completely manifested.

God may call someone and the individual fail to do his part. Both Old Testament and New provide examples of men who did not succeed in their mission. Faithless leaders stain the record of Israel. John the Baptist, Judas and the high priest Caiaphas failed to support Jesus as they should have. However God cannot manipulate men, as men manipulate machines. They must voluntarily

direct their will. For instance, in Paul's case it was not the spectacular call of God but Paul's wholehearted response which brought the success of the Gentile mission in the Mediterranean world.

Unification theology stresses the importance of human cooperation with God, whereas Calvinism prefers to overlook its significance completely. Calvinism implies that everything depends upon God. That is far from the case. If it were so would not a loving God have already restored this evil and suffering world? Without man's full cooperation the completion of His programme is delayed, He is greatly frustrated, and His heart is greatly saddened.

This fact applies equally to the Israel originally chosen for a leadership position in God's plan of restoration and to the Christian Church chosen to act as the vanguard in their place, after the rejection of Jesus. Israel was called by God to carry out a specific mission; when the nation failed to fulfill that intention, the Christian spiritual nation was selected to take its place. If the Church does not live up to its responsibilities, its power will also wane and another instrument be employed in the realization of God's unalterable purpose of creation. In effect, Unification theology proclaims both a message of comfort and a strong warning. God is determined to regain His sovereignty but He is not tied down to any specific human instruments by which to accomplish it. The overall plan has not changed and will not; the details vary in accordance with the response obtained from God's chosen.

THE LAW OF RESTITUTION

We turn now to a consideration of the law of restitution or indemnity by which followers of the dispensational figure play their important roles. The words restitution and indemnity are borrowed from the world of business yet provide useful analogies to explain the law guiding spiritual development. Indemnity refers to protection or exemption from damage one has done. Restitution involves paying an equivalent for any loss. Descriptive of aspects of religious growth and maturation, they serve to explain the

meaning of a single spiritual law. In restoration we must square our accounts with God and free ourselves from Satan.

From God man has received his very life; to Him he owes obedience and loyalty. But as a result of the Fall man has carelessly tossed aside his birthright; thus he needs to re-earn the privilege to fellowship and communion with God, restoring himself to his original state.

God does not and cannot forgive man unconditionally. The Fall of Adam and Eve was not an insignificant slight that could be easily overlooked and casually forgiven. It is therefore not enough simply for man to desire to return to God from the domain of Satan. Like the prodigal son of Jesus' parable, we must make our way painfully and step by step from the far country to our Father's house. Only when we get within sight of our birthplace will our Father run to meet us. Until then He can never be sure we really mean what we say. We are required to demonstrate by our will and actions that we truly intend to return to Him.

Unconditional forgiveness conflicts with the justice of God. However, because God is a God of love, He willingly makes concessions which result in man's compensating for only a fraction of his total debt. When man fulfills this condition, his whole debt is discharged. Then he is acknowledged by God as though he had not sinned at all.

The law of indemnity operates like a case of bankruptcy. Imagine that you owe someone a large sum but all you can scrape together is a token amount. Your creditor accepts what you have and forgives the balance. God's action is somewhat analagous. If we pay only five per cent of our actual debt to God He will wipe out the rest—the ninety-five per cent. However, the pittance man can pay is all he has. The five per cent in God's eyes is one hundred per cent for man. Clearing up his debt to God requires man's utmost devotion and whole-hearted commitment.

Because of the Fall and subsequent sins throughout history, Satan claims man as his own. From Eden to the present day, man has been in bondage to evil. Willingly and unwillingly, we are subjected to Satan. From the beginning he has dominated human-

ity, its civilization and its very soul. As Paul wrote, and Dostoevski and others graphically described, the whole creation groans for release.

Satan, however, is not so generous as God. He overlooks nothing, forgives nothing, writes off nothing. He demands one hundred per cent payment. Since man voluntarily sold himself into bondage to Satan, Satan expects total obedience, total loyalty, total submission. To buy freedom from him one must be willing to pay the full price. If it is not paid willingly, Satan exacts it in the form of pain, fear, anxiety, doubt, depression and sickness. Diverse and subtle are the methods by which he attempts to retain his servants.

In the Pharisaic Judaism of the first century it was customary to think of prayer, fasting and alms-giving as religious obligations. In his Sermon on the Mount Jesus criticized the debasement of these practices but did not really deny their usefulness and efficacy. For *Divine Principle*, personal and corporate prayer are enjoined as indispensable means by which man can call upon God, commune with Him and be inspired by Him. Fasting is likewise an exceedingly beneficial practice by which one pays indemnity and can be freed from Satanic bondage. Fasting helps to subjugate our bodies to the control of our mind. Since the realm of the flesh is an important part of the domain of Satan, by denial of its power one can be released from his rule. Therefore, for the purpose of spiritual freedom fasting has been held in high esteem among people of many religions, Occidental, Oriental, ancient, and modern. Like all religious practices it is subject to abuse and must be practiced with care, however.

As we have stated earlier, God offers us forgiveness by fulfilling certain conditions which involve only partial payment of our debt to Him. In this sense one can speak of God's graciousness and mercy. Nevertheless, for Unification theology, the restoration vertically between man and God should not be confused with the need for horizontal restitution between men. Injustices by man to another must be paid for, either on earth or in the spirit world to come. We must reconcile ourselves to those who may have suffered at our hands or to others in like circumstances.

Those who mistreat or harm others in any way will find themselves in the position of being themselves hurt if they fail to make amends. As the ancient Mosaic Law insisted, justice means an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. If men arrive in the spirit world with debts unpaid and sins unforgiven, they will perhaps have to assist the very ones they have hurt in order to atone for their faults. Since payment in the after-life is much more difficult, it behooves us to meet our obligations while we are yet in the flesh.

Earlier in this chapter Tillich was quoted to the effect that Calvin recognized that life itself seems to be guided by a selective rather than an egalitarian principle. For some happiness comes almost effortlessly. Everything cooperates to favor them. For others life is an uphill struggle with happiness at last crowning years of battle against unbelievable odds. And for not a few, whatever they do and however hard they labor, existence virtually begins and ends in disappointment and heartbreak. Jesus used a parable of the sower and the seed to illustrate how some reap thirty, sixty or a hundred fold from their planting. In that story he ignored those who sow good seed and harvest nothing but weeds. Nevertheless, such cases are far from rare. Why? we ask.

Divine Principle does not try to whitewash the human predicament. According to its teaching, man does not live and labor for himself alone. He is part of a family which stretches far back into the past; he sows and reaps in conjunction with his ancestors. In effect, they labor with him, for him, also against him. If the sun always shines on his endeavors, a man may be blessed by the labor of those who preceded him. Similarly, if the work of living seems to be cursed by frustration and defeat, a man could be paying for the indolence and mismanagement of his forebears. An individual is affected by what others have accomplished or failed to do. God's plan of universal restoration is helped or hindered by the record of past generations; God's justice is not revealed in the moment or in the individual, but in the overall scheme and course.

Such an interpretation of human existence helps to explain both success and failure. On one hand it keeps man from boasting of his own good fortune because in fact he is benefited by the

strenuous efforts of his ancestors. On the other hand it may keep a man from sinking into helpless resignation and hopeless despair. He is carrying the burden of previous generations. If we are singularly blessed, perhaps it is because we stand on the shoulders of our forefathers. If we find ourselves consigned to a deep pit from which there appears to be no escape despite our greatest exertion, we may be working for the release of others earning their eternal gratitude.

According to Unification theology, God is the Father of all mankind and every person without exception bears His image. Because of this He loves mankind and therefore cannot forsake any of His children. When American theologians were debating the worth of Calvinism in the first quarter of the last century, Unitarians maintained that man was too good to be simply dismissed as a depraved sinner in the hands of an angry God, as Jonathan Edwards had argued. Universalists examined the problem from a different angle and insisted that God was too loving to damn anyone He had created. Whether one begins with a recognition of the dignity of human nature or the goodness of God, he ends up with a denial of the doctrine of eternal reprobation. To believe in everlasting damnation is really to deny that God's original purpose of creation can be fulfilled. Either God made an irremediable mistake in creating man or man can permanently frustrate the divine will. Both positions run counter to the basic intent of Christian teaching.

Divine Principle denies the double predestination doctrine because God will ultimately embrace all of His children. If God is to triumph completely He must restore His entire creation and even win the rebellious Satan to His side.

For Unification theology each individual is precious in God's eyes; He has infinite individual images, each of which can only come to expression by that man or woman's perfection. As a man fulfills his own purpose for existence he opens a unique dimension and enriches God's happiness. Each person therefore has a gift which he alone can make to the restoration of the whole creation.

Beside Unification theology, Universalists in the 19th cen-

tury and Jehovah's Witnesses in our time are among those who have argued that if the scriptures are read properly one can see that the doctrine of an eternal hell to which the non-elect are consigned by divine decree is a non-Biblical notion. From the sermons of Reverend Hosea Ballou to the addresses of Pastor Russell one learns that hell is a pagan idea totally contrary to the Christian faith in a God of immeasurable love. Others have pointed out that the Hebrews did not get the idea of everlasting punishment from God but borrowed it from Persian Zoroastrianism when they were in Babylonian exile. If so, hell is not necessarily part of divine revelation.¹⁶

Bishop John A. T. Robinson writes that our error results when heaven and hell are objectivized as a description of the final condition of the universe. What is of eternal importance becomes what is of everlasting duration. For the English churchman this turns the profoundest truth into the final lie. As two everlasting co-existent realities side by side, heaven and hell portray the most terrible defeat for the love of God. God's love must finally win and none can make hell their final home. In God's universe there must ultimately be no heaven which tolerates an eternal chamber of horrors. Everlasting reprobation would make a final mockery of the divine nature and that cannot be.¹⁷

This would be the *Divine Principle* position. God is intensely anxious to restore man. Therefore, at any time in history when God can work, His central figures are characterized by His sense of urgency, His sincere desire to hasten the day when His preordained ideal is actualized among men.

¹⁶ In contemporary theology the doctrine of hell has been attacked by Berdyaev and the hope of universal restoration considered a genuine possibility by Barth.

¹⁷ J.A.T. Robinson, *In the End, God*, Harper & Row, N.Y., 1968, pp. 132-133.

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