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Continued by  
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**CONCERNING the doctrine of "predestination" (continued from last month).**

In the brief notice given to the subject of 'predestination' in last month's issue of the *S.S.* it was stated that the Bible has much to say about predestination, and that God is revealed as having predetermined much of biblical history. Indeed, the greatest event in world history, the coming of the Saviour, was because God had predestinated the event long before the world began (1st Peter 1:20). I am sure also that the New Testament clearly teaches that God has predestinated that sinful man can be saved from his condemned condition by the gospel of Jesus Christ. God has predetermined that those who will obey the Christ and His teaching will be saved, and that those who reject the Saviour will be eternally lost and damned. This is the predestination supported by the New Testament.

**The Doctrine of Predestination**

The teaching of Calvin and many other theologians, however, on predestination is that God has predestinated the salvation and damnation of *individuals i.e.* that William Brown is to be saved and John Jones is to be damned. The implications of such a doctrine are of course far reaching and raise many, to me, insurmountable

problems. Some of the main objections to such a doctrine would be the *charade of preaching the gospel* to people whose eternal destiny has already been unalterably fixed; the *unnecessary* death of the Son of God; the destruction of the concept of the free-agency and freewill of man; the *attribution of blame* upon God for all the sin in the world; God's *unfair condemnation* of the majority of the souls of men to everlasting punishment for sins for which they were not responsible; and for the *constant uncertainty* amongst men resulting from not knowing whether God had predestined them to heaven or hell. Calvin of course was not unaware of these problems, and although he tried to explain some of them, he advocated that we should not probe too deeply into these Godly "mysteries". John Knox had constant trouble in trying to persuade his mother-in-law that she was one of the elect, but eventually ended up, in desperation, by suggesting to her close self-examination and the doing of good works — things clearly opposed to the concept of predestination. Knox may have believed the doctrine with his head, but certainly not with his heart.

We have the assurance of God's word that, if we do the things commanded therein, we have passed from death to life and have the promise of life eternal. The "predestination" doctrine can give no such assurances, and can only suggest that if we are disposed towards Godly things it is a *fair indication* that we are of the elect. On the matter of the free-agency of man Calvin maintained that he saw no clash between predestination and man's freewill; but his writings also declared that there was no such thing as human freewill. To other reformers the idea of man having freewill was also anathema. Most of those holding the predestination view maintain that the gospel must nevertheless be proclaimed, for man is to be saved only by the gospel — but surely this is a contradiction of ideas. There is one group in Edinburgh which preaches the gospel to the audience but will not make any invitation to obedience, because they believe that by predestination those whom God will save will in any case obey the gospel in due course.

#### Scripture Teaching on Predestination: Romans 8:29,30

The scriptures used most commonly as the mainstay of the predestination doctrine are Rom. 8:29,30 and Ephesians 1:1-12. There are others, but these two are fairly representative. Let us briefly look first of all at Rom. 8:29,30. Paul is here talking about the purpose of God in calling out from the world His elect, and he says, "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified." We notice that Paul is speaking in the past tense and is declaring what God purposed at the dawn of time regarding His proposed dealings with man. Those whom God foreknew He would predestinate to conformity with the Son, those same He would call, justify and eventually glorify. We notice that the process begins with *foreknowledge* not *foreordination*. This class of people were not foreknown by God because He had predestined them to glory, but were predestined to glory because He foreknew them (*i.e.* foresaw that they would be faithful). Notice that the whole process set out in Rom. 8:29,30 (*i.e.* predestination, election, justification, glorification) is contingent upon the *foreknowledge of God* that certain people in every age will be faithful to Him. God *foresees* who will be faithful to Him and who will not be; and those whom He foresees to be faithful He has predetermined to enjoy election, justification and glorification. Calvin reverses this process and says that, because God has *predestined* certain individuals to heaven and certain to hell, He therefore *foresees* that that will take place.

Before man was created God foresaw his fall and designed the gospel for his redemption: this fact is well attested in scripture. The gospel, therefore, reveals God's purpose to redeem, justify and glorify a certain *class*, *i.e.* those who believe.

in Jesus. *This* is what God has predetermined — not *the identity* of the actual individuals to be saved. Hence we are called according to God's purpose by the gospel — not by some secret impulse of the Holy Spirit or other supernatural means, but by the preaching of the word: "faith cometh by hearing the word of God" (Rom. 10:17). This call we are completely free to accept or to reject, and our reaction to the call will determine our eternal welfare. God being eternal and timeless *foreknows* who will be saved and who will reject Him, such matters are all within the knowledge of God even now. To assume, however, that God must *foreordain* what a man's destiny shall be in order to *foresee* it is a profound absurdity. God's foreknowledge does not interfere with man's freewill and personal independence; but God's predestination certainly would. Man is no longer responsible for his actions if we agree that God makes him good or makes him evil. Romans 8:29,30 says that God has foreknowledge of those who will obey the gospel — He does not arrange it but He knows about it. Those therefore, whom God foreknows will accept His salvation, have also the approval of God, and God has predestinated all such to be justified and ultimately glorified. He did not foreknow them and accept them because of *His* predetermination that they should obey Him, but rather the reverse — He has predestinated them to life eternal *because* in His foreknowledge He knows that they will obey Him. In the matter of obedience they are left entirely uninfluenced by any predetermination on God's part. It is *after* obedience to the gospel that they inherit all the predetermined rewards and blessings of God. In other words their act of obedience was not determined by God's act of preordination, but rather His act of predetermination to life eternal was contingent upon their voluntary acts of compliance with the gospel. Romans 8:29,30 therefore *begins* with the premise that those who are to enjoy a predestined conformity with the Son, called, justified and glorified, are those foreknown to God. Foreknown in what sense? Foreknown in their obedience to His commands.

#### Ephesians 1:1-12

Ephesians 1:1-12 is too lengthy to quote in full here, but mention must be made of the essential verses. Verse 4 says "According as he [God] hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world,..." Verse 5: "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself..." Verse 11, "In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." Once again I suggest that these verses are all subject to the qualification made in Verse 1 of this chapter, *i.e.* that Paul is addressing *the church* in Ephesus — "*to the faithful in Christ Jesus.*" What is said to the church in Ephesus could equally be said to the church anywhere and everywhere. All that Paul says in verses 4,5 and 11 is rightly applicable to Christ's church. The church *was* chosen in God before the foundation of the world. The church (or faithful in Christ) *has been* "predestinated unto the adoption of children". The church *has been* predestinated according to the purpose of God. This is all a far cry, however, from saying that *the individuals* composing the church (Tom, Dick and Harry) were all chosen to be members of the church before the world began. Paul is speaking generally and not particularly. *The faithful in Christ* have been predestined to glory by God. Some of those faithful today may not be faithful tomorrow. Calvin's idea that *individuals* were predestinated to life eternal forced him into the further error that such could never fall from that position of grace, no matter how debauched they became. God never decreed that any certain person should be saved (or condemned) but He did predetermine what *kind of person* should be given salvation, and then left it to the individual to accept for such salvation. Predestination is very much involved in man's salvation and in God's dealings with man. God predestinated *the plan or terms* of salvation — the gospel. God predestinated *the means* of salvation — the Saviour. God predestinated *the place and bounds* of salvation — the church. God did not, however, predestinate *named individuals* to accept His salvation and force all others to reject it.

Only brief notice has been made of these two passages, but in this controversial matter it is essential for us to distinguish between God's *foreknowledge* and His *foreordination*. Augustine said, "There can be no predestination without foreknowledge; but there can be foreknowledge without predestination". I think we must also distinguish between references in general, and references in particular. The church as a *community* has been predestined to glory, but this is quite a different thing from saying that only certain *individuals* were destined to be church members.

#### "Whosoever Will"

My remarks have not covered the mass of scripture diametrically opposed to Calvinistic ideas of predestination, and which readers will no doubt have already been thinking about. "Come unto me *all ye* that labour and are heavy laden..."; "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved"; "Preach the gospel to every creature"; "God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance"; "Save yourselves from this untoward generation"; "Make your calling and election sure"; "He that believeth not shall be condemned". Surely even these few random samples from God's words show that to his dying day man is a completely free agent, able either to accept or to reject the pleading of God, and that he is not in any Calvinistic sense the victim of God's iron and apparently arbitrary decree that he has been chosen for salvation or singled out for eternal condemnation.