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ELECTION AND PREDESTINATION

By: C. D. Cole

God’s purposes are the rules by which He acts; the Bible contains the rules by which we are required to act. None ever have; none ever will act according to these rules, and find themselves barred out of heaven by any decree of the Almighty. Decrees affect none of us until they are executed. They are never executed upon the impenitent, until they have refused all the free calls and invitations of the gospel. They are free, therefore, in their refusal they are equally as free to accept. There is nothing to hinder their acceptance of life, in the wide universe, but their own stubborn wills. God invites “the ends of the earth,” to look unto Him and be saved. That invitation is sincere. Not one of Adam’s race ever accepted it who was afterwards told that he was not in the covenant, that the eternal purpose did not include him. The call is to all, and none that come are turned empty away. If the sinner is lost, therefore, it is his fault and not the fault of the purpose that left him free.

I purpose now to illustrate this whole subject with a borrowed allegory, which is none the worse for having done service half a century ago. “Suppose a number of the subjects of an earthly prince have committed high treason, are under sentence of death, and in prison, await the day of execution. No justice is done them if they are all left to perish. But the prince, willing to make his mercy known, and seeing that it will promote the happi-

ness of his empire to pardon a part of them, while its safety demands that some of them shall perish, resolves to vindicate his justice, while he displays his mercy. Let us suppose the king to be a prophet. (Some kings have been prophets.) He therefore sees beforehand how each prisoner will act. He determines upon his own course, and with thousands of his subjects proceed to the prison. The doors are unbarred, the chains knocked off, and the prince addresses them in language like this: ‘Unhappy men I have put it in your power to be free. No bolt or shackle confines you to your cell. If you will now approach me, confess your crimes, ask for forgiveness, and submit to my government, I will not only pardon you but make you my sons.’ ‘We cannot,’ they say. ‘What hinders?’ asks the prince, ‘The door is open, the chains no longer bind your limbs.’ ‘We humble ourselves at your feet and confess ourselves criminals deserving death! We ask pardon at your hands! Never! We prefer to die!’ Now the prince turns beggar and entreats them with tears and strong crying, ‘Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die?’ They still refuse. He then appeals to the spectators: ‘Do I cause the death of these unhappy men?’ All answer, ‘No!’ Are they not as free to

accept life as they are in their refusal? The spectators again answer, ‘They are.’ ‘Can more be reasonably expected of me?’ ‘Nothing more,’ is heard from every tongue. Thus far all have fared alike, in his offers and entreaties. Thus far all have refused his mercy and spurned his grace. Will he leave them all to die? Then how will he make his mercy known among his

subjects? How display his pardoning power? The thousands gathered there stand in breathless anxiety and await the issue.

We will now suppose that the king has the power, with a touch, to melt them into contrition. He reaches forth his hand and lays it on half the

number. At once they fall on their knees and implore his mercy. He grants them the pardon they ask and adopts them as his sons. This last act was as free as their refusal. They willingly submitted. The king’s knowledge of what they would do, did not, could not influence them in what they did. His resolution to save some of them, formed before he left the palace, influenced his action, but not theirs in refusing his mercy. What injustice was done to those he left to perish? He was under no obligation to any of them. He compelled none of them to die. Justice, and the safety of his kingdom, forbid that he should forcibly

Does one of my readers sincerely desire to be saved on God’s terms? Lord love you, my friend, He has an eternal purpose to save you, or you would never have such a desire.

reclaim them all. The happiness of his subjects and the display of his mercy, required that he should pardon a part of them, and they themselves forced him to choose between them and the vessels of his mercy. He must discriminate or leave them all to die. Was there anything wrong in what he did at the prison? I think my readers will all agree that there was not. Then what wrong was there in the purpose to do what he did. Though the purpose was formed while he was yet in the palace, could it be wrong to determine beforehand to do a right thing?"

This supposed case, apparently represents the subject under discussion. Mankind had sinned, and was under sentence of death. Jesus died to open the prison doors. He offers salvation to all, but all refuse His pardoning love. He must elect the vessels of mercy, or leave them all to inevitable ruin. It is their own fault that this divine interposition is necessary. They all have it in their power (so far as natural ability is requisite) to live. They ought to comply with Jehovah's terms of their own accord, but they will not. Not one of Adam's race will do it. All refuse until they die, unless they are subdued by power and love divine. Is it wicked for imagination to picture high archangels looking with mournful expectation upon the scene? Eternal wisdom pleads with men! "The Mighty God" entreats a worm! But men disrespect his love! Worms despise His grace! Justice demands that all shall die. The good of God's vast empire forbids that they shall all be pardoned. Some must be pardoned in order to make His mercy known. Not one, of all the race, will choose eternal life. Now, God elects between them; Romans 9:20 "**...who art thou that repliest against God?...**" Has He not a right to do what He does in the case? Has He injured those He left? Do you say the favored ones were as undeserving as the rest? True, they were. None of us deserved the mercy

we received. But God asks, "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?" If He injures none of His subjects in blessing a part of them, what injustice will you charge Him with? Reason exempts from every charge.

I will now proceed to another view of this subject. So far I have discussed it from a purely human standpoint. We can scarcely comprehend the idea of an eternal "present." With us, the past, the present, and the future are three distinct periods; with God, it is all present. This idea seems to be intended in II Peter 3:8, "**...one day is with the LORD as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.**" The flight of years is nothing to infinity. He is as happy, as great, as infinite in one day, as in a thousand years. One day, aye one moment, concentrates whole eternities in Him. With men there is indeed a before, a present, and hereafter. With us there is succession of events. Not so with God. He fills eternity past and future, as we fill immensity in the present moment. All to Him is one eternal now!

With Him the existence of His creatures, was as early as His decree to create; with Him the execution of His design, and His purpose to execute them, are in the same moment. Hence Jesus was to Him Revelation 13:8, as a "**...Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.**" God's eternal purpose is, therefore, simply His present purpose, always existing, and always the same. Could we familiarize our minds with this mode of the being of God, it would be easy for us to understand how that which is predestination to us, is only a present purpose with Him, and that of necessity, what is a present purpose with an unchanging God, is an eternal purpose. I would not attempt to illustrate the mode of God's existence. This cannot be done. But I think I can illustrate my idea on that point, so that each reader may fully understand it. The center of a circle bears the same

relation to any part of the circle, that it does to every other part. And so it is, that while creatures lie along that circle, in succession, as they relate to each other, yet their relation to deity, who fills the center and side circumference of all eternity alike, is the same in every period. His eternal now, stands equally opposite to every period of time, and eternity, if I may speak of periods in eternity.

Let us now notice some of the objections urged against this doctrine. One of these is usually stated in this language: "What is the use of prayer, or efforts of any kind, if all is fixed from eternity?" Such an objection may lie with force against the heathen doctrine of fatality; a fixed necessity in things themselves, independent of the controlling power and will of God. But it can have no weight against the doctrine of election, including the decree. This objection is based on the crude notion that predestination is an old promise, resolution, or determination upon the part of the Almighty that so ties His hands, that He cannot save a sinner, even though He may wish to do so. But I think I have clearly shown that the eternal purpose of God, is His present purpose. Let me ask the objector if God will save any man who sincerely asks and trusts Him? Oh, who will say, No? I assure you, the predestinarians don't live that will. If, then, God has a mind to save him when he prays, and God is the same the day he prays that He always was, did He not always mind to save him? And what is that but predestination? And what objection have you to it? You don't object, I hope, to God's saving a soul; then why object to His intention to do it. Does the sinner sincerely pray? why dear reader, that prayer was understood as well "in the beginning" as it is today. Does one of my readers sincerely desire to be saved on God's terms? Lord love you, my friend, He has an eternal purpose to save you, or you would never have such a desire.

There is another objection raised against this doctrine that I wish to notice. It is this, God invites all men to be saved, but if He has elected only a part and the "rest are blinded," His invitations are insincere. This objection can have no weight unless it can be shown that the decree to save some and let others alone, causes the rejection of the invitation. This cannot be done. The sinner rejects offered mercy of his own free will, uninfluenced by anything that God has done; influenced by Satan, not by decrees. And here I may as well state that while events do not succeed each other in point of time, in the mind of God they do succeed each other in point of logic. All is one eternal now with Jehovah; and hence, so far as time is concerned every event, the decree and the execution alike are in the same moment. But logically this is not so. The sinner's rejection of mercy, precedes the decree to let them alone in every logical sense. No man is sent to hell until he sins, aye, fails to accept the provisions of grace and it was thus, the whole transaction lay in the eternal mind, "in the beginning."

Let me illustrate: you take hold of a spoke in a wheel and it moves in the same moment, but logically the spoke you take hold of moves first, for if it does not move neither will the rest; it moves all the others. So in a logical

sense the sinner's rejection of Christ precedes the decree to leave him to perish.

Again, this objection with equal force against the foreknowledge of God. If a decree to let the sinner alone, to pursue his own course, proves the invitation insincere, the foreknowledge of his willful rejection of Christ, would prove them equally insincere; and yet there are but few who stand on the atheistic ground that "God doesn't know everything." His sincerity stands alike unimpeached by His omniscience and His purpose.

I will now make some improvement of this subject and close my remarks. The doctrine of election is one of peculiar interest to the Christian. With this doctrine he goes down to the bottom in Isaiah 12:3, to "**...draw water out of the wells of salvation.**" No one realizes as the Christian does his own unworthiness. He often asks in deep humility,

*"Why was I made to hear his voice,
And enter while there's room;
Whilst others make a wretched choice
And rather Starve than come?"*

Election answers, Matthew 11:26, "**Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.**" Pride asks, Am I

to have no honour, no credit for all I've done, "to win the prize?" Election answers,

*"Grace first contrived the way
To save rebellious man;
And all the steps did grace display
Which drew the wondrous plan.
Grace all the works shall crown,
Through everlasting days;
It lays in heaven the topmost stone
And well deserves the praise."*

Thus pride is humbled by it. And now temptation, trials, and troubles come in like a flood, and the Christian wonders if he will ever get to heaven. Error says, "You may fall from grace, and go to hell at last." But God answers in this doctrine, Your name was written in the Lamb's book of life before the world began.

How can you be lost? John 6:37, "**All that the Father giveth me shall come to me;...**" I Peter 1:5, "**Who are kept by the power of God...unto salvation...**" an error is put to shame, and the tried heart is stayed on Jesus. The doctrine honours God and humbles men. Father, I thank thee for electing grace!



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