

# **P R E D E S T I N A T I O N**

**By Jonas C. Sikes**

**Being his first article on this subject, April, 1900**

I think it is hurtful and wrong to make a hobby of any one point of doctrine (even though it is the truth) to the exclusion of all others, yet I think we should preach a full gospel and not shun to declare the whole counsel of God. But I think it is the best, yea, the wisest and only Scriptural course, when speaking on this or any other subject (and especially when we know that some of the dear saints differ from us), to be kind and gentle and meekly instruct them. It has been said, "good words do more than hard speeches." The warm sunshine on a Spring morning will make the farmer pull off his overcoat, while all the blustering winds of Winter will only make him draw it closer to him. If we would do as Solomon, we would seek to find out acceptable words, yet we should not go so far in that direction as to forsake the truth. He says, "*The preacher sought to find out acceptable words, and that which is written is upright, even words of truth.*" I think this would be a wise course for all of God's ministers, and I desire to follow it.

With this much said, I now desire to say something on the subject of *predestination*. I desire that after my departure my friends may have my views on this all-important subject. I think that the statement in the London Confession of Faith with reference to this subject is highly correct, i.e., that "this high mystery of predestination should be handled with special prudence and care." How well I shall be able to succeed in doing this will be left for the readers to judge.

Predestination means a previous purpose or a previous determination. Webster defines it as the "purpose of God from eternity respecting all events." I accept this as its true meaning. Yet Webster was only a man and must not be considered as infallible in divine things. This doctrine can never be understood as long as we try to measure it by anything short of God Himself. The nearer we come to an understanding of Him, what He is, and the nature

of His divine attributes, the nearer we will come to a full and complete understanding of this doctrine.

1st. God is eternal. Hence, His purposes or determinations must also be eternal, if He is eternally perfect in all His attributes. I shall not claim that His purpose is an attribute, but it is the outgrowth (to say the least of it) of wisdom, which is an attribute. And here I would note that when I say "wisdom," that I do not mean *knowledge*. Wisdom is one thing and knowledge is another, as you will find by consulting the 11th chapter of Romans. Wisdom in man is that natural attribute by which he is enabled to study or investigate and find out things that he would not otherwise know. Hence, when he gets to the limit of his wisdom or intellectual powers in an investigation he can go no further; he has found out all he can know about it. But if his wisdom had been perfect, he would have seen through the whole thing at a glance the first time it was presented to his mind. Hence, his knowledge of it would have been perfect. God being eternally perfect in wisdom has known all things. I shall not claim as to the order of time that God's wisdom is older than His knowledge, for then I would set up for a time a God of wisdom without any knowledge. But I will say that in the order of thought, wisdom is the real basis or foundation of all knowledge. Wisdom is the basic attribute of the Godhead, by which He is governed in all His other attributes. Without wisdom, power would be misused, love would be without a true guide, justice and judgment could not exist, mercy would be a misnomer; in fact, chaos would reign supreme, and "God" would be a name for nothing. So then, wisdom being the foundation of all that is right, I desire upon this foundation to build my structure.

It has been suggested by some, that if we could prove that the first transgression was predestinated, then the predestination of all things could be established. So, to this end I shall first direct my attention. In the first place, I would ask, did not God know that if He made Adam as He did and placed him where he would be subjected to the evil influence of the Serpent, that he would transgress? If not, where is the perfection of His wisdom? If He did, why did He make him and place him thus? Was it because He was not

able to make a perfect man; one that would not yield to temptation? one that could not be corrupted? If so, where is the perfection of His power? If He did not have the power then, and has never, nor will never increase in power, will He ever be able to take a poor, fallen wretch and make a perfect and incorruptible man out of him? I suppose, however, that all who claim to be Old School or Primitive Baptists will admit that He had both the wisdom and the power to have had it different, if He had willed it different, but this would be an admission that He did not will it different, which would be to say that He willed it to come to pass as it did. These are self-evident facts. If God willed it to be different from the way it came to pass, is it not remarkably strange that He arranged things so that He knew that it would not work out as He intended it, when He could only have thought how He would have it to be, and said, "Let it be so," and it would have been so? It is a self-evident fact that needs no argument to prove it, that either the introduction of sin into the world was according to God's purpose, or else the whole covenant plan of redemption, the advent of Christ into the world, all of His righteous life, all His suffering and death, His resurrection and ascension are not the result of God's free and independent purpose, for it was to redeem man from the **consequences of this act and its outgrowth** that all the above took place. Hence, if the transgression was not a part of God's eternal purpose, then it follows that the covenant of redemption owes its existence (not to the free and independent purpose of God outside of an extraneous influence, but) to the act of a man by which it was made necessary and a way opened up for it to enter. So, in order of thought it would stand thus: First, God determined to make a man. Second, He saw that man would transgress. Third, He devised a plan of redemption. This order cuts God's purpose in two, and sets them thus: First, God's free and independent purpose was to create man. Second, God's knowledge of man's independent act in transgression; and Third, God's necessitated purpose to redeem man was influenced by what He foresaw. If we follow this stream to its logical end, where will it empty? If God had rather sin had not entered the world, then it follows that there has never been a single act, or creature, or thing, in this universe that has been as God originally

would rather have had it; because every act, creature, or thing, has been in some way affected by sin, which (according to that view) had rather had never existed. Even the earth, with which every living thing has to do, was cursed because of transgression, which God would rather have had different. Not even one act of the holy Son of God was as God would rather have had it, for His acts were to redeem **sinners**, when God had rather there had been no sinners to redeem. Nor throughout all eternity can anything be as it would have pleased God to have had it, for it will be one eternal song and shouts from the **redeemed sinners** praising Him for their redemption, when God had rather that man had never sinned. If this were so, then there would have been no redemption from sin and no shouting of praises by redeemed sinners. I shall trace this stream no farther at present, for I see from its course that it empties into the broad ocean of infidelity. But all of the above is true and much more that might be said, if God did not purpose that sin should enter the world.

It is said that God **foreknew** that man would sin and He *therefore* made arrangements to meet it. But stop, my brother, this "*therefore*" is what I object to. It says that the foreseen act of man was the cause of God making the covenant, so you see at once that if this act of man was not embraced in God's purpose then the origin of the covenant is owing partly (to say the least of it) to something outside of God, or His purpose. This branch empties into the stream that we have just left, so we will quit it. You say that God *foreknew* that man would sin, so say I. But I would ask upon whom did this foreseen act of man then depend? Man was not yet created, and his existence depended yet wholly upon God and the fulfillment of His purpose, and surely none can think that man's act could ever have been, had there been no man to act. So then, this foreseen act of man could not have been any less dependent upon the fulfillment of God's purpose for existence than was the man by whom it was to come.

Having thus far confined myself to what seems to be self-evident facts and irresistible conclusions I will now notice some Scripture on the subject.

I will first call attention to Genesis 1:28: *"And God blessed them and God said unto them, Be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth and subdue it."* Now, the word, *"replenish"* means to "fill up." From this it will be seen that instead of God meaning for them to remain in the garden, He meant for them to fill up and inhabit the entire earth. To this we will add the 29th verse: *"And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb-bearing seed which is upon the face of **all the earth**, and **every tree** in which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed, **it shall be to you for meat.**"* In the first place, we see from this, that man was intended to inhabit the entire earth, from the fact that the fruits that grow on all the face of the earth were to be meat, or food, for him. And in the second place, we see that the fruit of every tree on earth that bore seed was to be to them for meat. Some questions might arise in our minds right here. Was there any such tree in all the earth that yielded fruit as the tree of knowledge of good and evil? If so, was it to be for them for meat? If not, what does the above language mean? But I will pass this for the present.

We next call attention to Acts 17:24-26: *"God who made the world and all things therein, seeing that He is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands, neither is worshipped with man's hands, as though He needed anything, seeing 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."* It is clearly seen from this as well as from Genesis that God's purpose was (not that man should remain in the garden, but) that he should dwell on all the face of the earth. This is what Paul says that He made them for. Much might be said right here, but this article is going to grow lengthy, so I pass on.

I will now call your attention to Genesis 2:5: *"And there was not a man to till the ground."* The next verse tells us of God watering the earth and making man. Now, what would we reasonably conclude from the above Scripture, was God's purpose for making man? I think all reasonable men would say, "to till the ground." The other passages referred to show that God

purposed that man should dwell on all the face of the earth and all of the fruits of the various trees thereof should be to them for meat; while this one shows that God purposed that man should till the ground. Some say, "O, yes, this is all true, but it is because God foresaw that man would transgress that He purposed to scatter them on all the face of the earth and have them till the earth." But then we would be forced to admit one of two things, i.e., that this foreseen transgression was a part of God's original purpose, or else the *cause* of this purpose to scatter them on all the face of the earth and that they should till the ground **was outside** of both God and His original purpose to make man. This again resolves itself into the absurd position that we have already noticed: First, That God freely and independently purposed to make man. Second, That He foresaw that man would not do as He willed for him to do. Third, That God was governed in all of His other purposes concerning man, both for time and eternity, by the foreseen act of man rather than His own sovereign and independent will and choice. But I must quit this part of the subject and notice for a while the reason why God created all things.

It is said by Solomon that, "*The Lord has made all things for Himself yea **even the wicked** for the day of evil*" (Proverb 16:4). From this we learn that God made all things for Himself. It is said in Revelation that "*Thou hast made all things for Thyself and for Thy pleasure they **are** (now exist) and were created*" (Revelation 4:11). From this we find that they were all created for His pleasure, and they **are still** existing for the same purpose. In Colossians, it is said, "*All things were created by Him and **for Him***" (Colossians 1:16). This is enough to prove that God had a use for all that He created. Now it is admitted by all that some men come into the world sinners, they live in sin and they die in sin and go to eternal perdition. Will someone please tell me whether or not God's purpose in creating them is or will be fulfilled in them?

God's purpose in time and all created things is, I think, for the manifestation of His own glory. In other words, to manifest Himself in all of His divine perfections and manifestly glorify Himself in all of His attributes. Now, we read of His own eternal purpose, His immutable counsel, the counsel of His will, etc., so in order of thought we say that God "held a council" in

eternity. He was guided by wisdom, and consulted His own will. In this council was considered all things that He now *"works after the counsel of His own will."* As a result of that council the world was created and all things therein. Now look at this creation as it fell from the plastic hand of the Creator. Is it not wonderful? Yea, marvelous! But how many of the attributes of the Godhead do you see manifested in this wonderful work? Only two: wisdom and power. Wisdom to contrive this wonderful plan and power to perform it. Wisdom and power are here manifested as being infinitely great, but love, mercy, justice, wrath, and His immortal purity are yet unknown to man and must remain so as long as man remains in his state of innocence. God can love man just the same in his upright as in his fallen state, but love cannot be manifested in its fullness so as to glorify God in this attribute. *"If ye love them that love you what reward have ye: do not even the Publicans the same?"* (Matthew 5:46-47). So, God's love could not be manifested in its fullness on them that loved Him. *"Peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die,"* so if Christ had died for a **good man** it would have manifested no more love than perhaps some men would have done, so then it must be true that for God's love to be manifested in its fullness man must fall from his "good" and upright state. Man fell, and it is said that *"God commendeth His love for us, in that while we were **yet sinners** Christ died for us"* (Romans 5:8); also, that *"God, who is **rich in mercy**, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were **dead in sins**, hath quickened us together with Christ"* (Ephesians 2:1-5). Here we have His great love most gloriously **manifested** on fallen man.

Next, we come to mercy. The above text says, *"But God, who is rich in mercy. . ."* Yes, He is rich in mercy, but how can mercy be bestowed on one who **is not a sinner**? How could the great richness of God's mercy ever have been manifested without a transgressor? But man transgressed and now God can *"make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had **afore prepared** unto glory"* (Romans 9:23). Yet notwithstanding the greatness of God's love, and the richness of His mercy, they must have been forever unknown and unappreciated if man had **not become a sinner**.

These two most glorious attributes, however, could not reach the case of, nor benefit, a sinner at the expense, or exclusion, of justice. Justice, in its greatness could not be manifested in a world of sinless, upright beings, but when man transgressed, she laid her iron hand upon him; love nor mercy can reach him only through justice. Behold what unrelenting justice! Before she will swerve one jot or one tittle, she will take the heir of heaven, the only Son of the Supreme Judge Himself, who sits upon the great white throne, and slay Him for the crimes committed.

Love and mercy, guided by wisdom, offers Him as a ransom. Justice, guided by wisdom, accepts Him in behalf of all for whom He became a Surety. But God continues to show His wrath and make His power known on the vessels of wrath **fitted to destruction**. Through all of this we can see God in His true character. His attributes are most gloriously manifested in the creation of the world and His dealings with **sinners**, and I feel sure that this course has been no second choice with Him!

Man may determine to do a thing and seeing that it will not work out as he desired it should, make some subsequent arrangements to meet and rectify in measure this foreseen, yet undesirable event. But the all-glorious eternal "I AM" has never been so hard-pressed as that! But this is exactly the light He must be held in by all who hold that He did not purpose that sin should exist. They must divide His purposes into two sets: *anterior* and *posterior*.

His *anterior* purpose being His purpose to create all things, which purposes would be absolutely free from, and independent of, and in no way influenced, or hampered by, any unpleasant foreseen event, which was coming up outside of His purpose. His *posterior* purposes being all such as relate to man as a *sinner*. The covenant of redemption and the punishment of sin go together. In fact, all of His dealings with man as a sinner from the morn of transgression to the eve of eternity would come under the head of His posterior purposes, being made as the result of, and to meet and deal with, an *unpleasant foreseen event*, which was coming up outside of, and in no way attributable to, His purpose.



Such a petty god may do to speculate upon, but it is not the God before whom the "four and twenty elders" fell down in wonder and admiration, and cast their glittering crowns before His throne, shouting, "*Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power: for Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are and were created*". The man who believes that the transgression was a *foreseen* event not *embraced* in God's eternal purpose, and that the covenant was made to meet this exterior foreseen event, must admit that God has anterior and posterior purposes. He must admit that His anterior purposes are based on an *interior cause* (the counsel of His will), and His posterior purposes are based on an *exterior cause* (an unpurposed foreseen event). We are all bound to admit that in the order of thought God's knowledge of man's transgression was based on His determination to make man, for had there been no such determination to make man, there would have been no knowledge that there would be a man to transgress. If there had been no knowledge that there would be a man to transgress, there would have been no covenant made to redeem man for transgression. So, we are forced to either take the position that it was all from start to finish embraced in God's eternal and unchangeable purpose, or that He has anterior purposes based upon interior causes, and also posterior purposes based upon exterior causes. The latter is Arminianism straight, so you can see at a glance that I believe in the predestination of all things. I shall not try to *add* to the strength of this doctrine by the use of the term "absolute," nor diminish its force by the use of the term "permissive."

I have neither time nor inclination at present to enlarge upon this subject, for my article has grown too lengthy already. But I will say this much more: if the logic contained herein is true with reference to the first transgression, it is also true with reference to every other event of time. This is my first, and may be my last, upon this subject, but I desired to record my views upon it before I go hence. With me it is either an **Almighty God** who works all things after the counsel of His will, or no God at all. I fail to find any standing room between this and atheism.

If this scribble should help any poor, halting child to a better understanding of this profoundly deep and mysterious subject, I would be glad to hear from them. With love to all the household of faith, I remain a poor, unworthy sinner, saved by grace, if saved at all.