

# The Sovereignty of God

Three articles by Loraine Boettner

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## About the author:

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## 1. The Sovereignty of God

Every thinking person readily sees that some sovereignty rules his life. He was not asked whether or not he would have existence; nor when, where, or what he would be born; whether in the twentieth century or before the flood; whether white or Negro; whether in America or in China. It has been recognized by Christians in all ages that God is the Creator and Ruler of the universe, and that as the Creator and Ruler of the universe He is the ultimate source of all the power that is found in the creatures. Hence nothing can come to pass apart from His sovereign will; and when we dwell upon this truth we find that it involves considerations which establish the Calvinistic and disprove the Arminian position. By virtue of the fact that God has created everything which exists, He is the absolute Owner and final Disposer of all that He has made. He exerts not merely a general influence, but actually rules in the world which He has created. The nations of the earth, in their insignificance, are as the small dust of the balance when compared with His greatness; and far sooner might the sun be stopped in his course than God be hindered in His work or in His will. Amid all the apparent defeats and inconsistencies of life God actually moves on in undisturbed majesty. Even the sinful actions of men can occur only by His permission. And since he permits not unwillingly but willingly, all that comes to pass --- including the actions and ultimate destiny of men --- must be, in some sense, in accordance with what He has desired and purposed. Just in proportion as this is denied God is excluded from the government of the world. Naturally some problems arise here which we in our present state of knowledge are not fully capable of solving; but that is no sufficient ground for rejecting what the Scriptures and the plain dictates of reason affirm to be true. If the power of an earthly king is law in his kingdom, how much more shall the word of God be in His! For example, the Christian knows that the day is certainly coming when, willingly or unwillingly, every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. In the Scriptures He is represented to us as God ALMIGHTY, who sits upon the throne of universal dominion. He knows the end from the beginning and the means to be used in attaining that end. He is able to do for us exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or even think. The category of the impossible has no existence for Him "with whom all things are possible," Matt. 19:26; Mark 10:27. This, however, does not mean that God has power to do that which is contrary to His nature, "to work contradictions. It is impossible for God to lie, or to do anything which is morally wrong. He cannot make two and two equal five, nor can He make a wheel turn around and stand still at the same time. His omnipotence is as sure a guarantee that the course of the world will conform to His plan as is His holiness a guarantee that all His works will be right. Not only in the New Testament but In the Old Testament as well we find this doctrine of God's sovereignty consistently developed. Dr. Warfield says concerning the doctrine as it is found there: "The Almighty Maker of all that is is represented equally as the irresistible Ruler of all that He has made; Jehovah sits as King for ever (Ps. 29:1 0)." He goes on to say that the writers rarely use such expressions as "it rains;" they instinctively speak of God sending rain, etc. The possibility of accident and chance are excluded and even "the lot was an accepted means of obtaining the decision of God (Joshua 7:16; 14:2; 18:6; 1 Sam. 10:19; Jonah 1:7). All things without exception, indeed, are disposed by Him, and His will is the ultimate account of all that occurs. Heaven and earth and all that is in them are the instruments through which He works His ends. Nature, nations, and the fortunes of the individual alike present in all their changes the transcript of His purpose. The winds are His messengers, the flaming fire His servant: every natural occurrence is His act; prosperity is His gift, and if calamity falls upon man it is the Lord that has done it (Amos 3:5, 6; Lam. 3:33-38; Is. 47:7; Eccl, 7:14; Is. 54:16). It is He that leads the feet of men, wit they whither or not; He that raises up and casts down; opens and hardens the heart; and creates the very thoughts and intents of the soul." (*Biblical Doctrines*, art. Predestination, p.9.) And shall we not believe that God can convert a sinner when He pleases? Cannot the Almighty, the omnipotent Ruler of the universe, change the characters of the creatures He has made? He changed the water into wine at Cana, and converted Saul on the road to Damascus. The leper said, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean," and at a word his leprosy was cleansed. God is as able to cleanse the soul as the body, and we believe that if He chose to do so He could raise up such a flood of Christian ministers, missionaries, and workers of various kinds that the world would be converted in a very short time. If He actually purposed to save all men He could send hosts of angels to instruct them and to do supernatural works on the earth. He could Himself work marvelously on the heart of every person

so that no one would be lost. Since evil exists only by His permission, He could, if He chose, blot it out of existence. His power in this latter respect was shown, for instance, in the work of the destroying angel who in one night slew all the first-born of the Egyptians (Ex. 12:29), and in another night slew 185,000 of the Assyrian army (2 Kings 19:35). It was shown when the earth opened and swallowed Korah and his rebellious allies (Nu. 16:31-33). Ananias and Sapphira were smitten (Acts 5:1-11); Herod was smitten and died a horrible death (Acts 12:23). God has lost none of His power, and it is highly dishonoring to Him to suppose that He is struggling along with the human race doing the best He can but unable to accomplish His purposes. Although the sovereignty of God is universal and absolute, it is not the sovereignty of blind power. It is coupled with infinite wisdom, holiness and love. And this doctrine, when properly understood, is a most comforting and reassuring one. Who would not prefer to have his affairs in the hands of a God of infinite power, wisdom, holiness and love, rather than to have them left to fate, or chance, or irrevocable natural law, or to short-sighted and perverted self? Those who reject God's sovereignty should consider what alternatives they have left. The affairs of the universe, then, are controlled and guided, how? "According to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His will." The present day tendency is to set aside the doctrines of Divine Sovereignty and Predestination in order to make room for the autocracy of the human will. The pride and presumption of man, on the one hand, and his ignorance and depravity on the other, lead him to exclude God and to exalt himself so far as he is able; and both of these tendencies combine to lead the great majority of mankind away from Calvinism. The Arminian idea which assumes that the serious intentions of God may in some cases at least be defeated, and that man, who is not only a creature but a sinful creature, can exercise veto power over the plans of Almighty God, is in striking contrast with the Biblical idea of His immeasurable exaltation by which He is removed from all the weaknesses of humanity. That the plans of men are not always executed is due to a lack of power, or a lack of wisdom; but since God is unlimited in these and all other resources, no unforeseen emergencies can arise, and to Him the causes for change have no existence. To suppose that His plans fail and that He strives to no effect, is to reduce Him to the level of His creatures.

### *Scripture Proof*

Dan. 4:35: He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest thou? Jer. 32:17: Ah Lord Jehovah! behold thou hast made the heavens and the earth by thy great power and by thine outstretched arm; and there is nothing too hard for thee. Matt. 28:18: All authority hath been given unto me (Christ) in heaven and on earth. Eph. 1:22: And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church. Eph. 1:11: In whom we were made a heritage, having been foreordained according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His will. Is. 14:24, 27: Jehovah of hosts hath sworn, saying, surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass . . . For Jehovah of hosts hath purposed, and who shall annul it? and His hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back? Is. 46:9, 10, 11: Remember the former things of old; for I am God. and there is none else; I am God and there is none like me; declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure . . . yea, I have spoken; I will also bring It to pass; I have purposed, I will also do it. Gen. 18:14: Is anything too hard for Jehovah? Job 42:2: I know that thou canst do all things, And that no purpose of thine can be restrained. Ps. 115:3: Our God is in the heavens. He hath done whatsoever He pleased. Ps. 135:6: Whatsoever Jehovah pleased, that hath He done. In heaven, in earth, in the seas, and in all deeps. Is. 55:11: So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth; it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it. Rom. 9:20, 21: Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why didst thou make me thus? Or hath not the potter a right over the clay, from the same lump to make one part a vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor?

## 2. The Providence of God

"God's works of providence are His most holy, wise, and powerful preserving and governing all his creatures and all their actions." (Shorter Catechism, answer to Question 11.) The Scriptures very clearly teach that all things outside of God owe not merely their original creation, but their continued existence, with all their properties and Powers, to the will of God. He upholds all things by the word of His power, Heb. 1:3. He is before all things, and in Him all things consist, Col. 1:17. "Thou art Jehovah, even thou alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their hosts, the earth and all things that are therein, the seas and all that is in them, and thou preservest them all," Neh. 9:6. "In Him we live, and move and have our being," Acts 17:28. He is "over all, and through all, and in all," Eph. 4:6. Throughout the Bible the laws of nature, the course of history, the varying fortunes of individuals, are ever attributed to God's providential control. All things, both in heaven and earth, from the seraphim down to the tiny atom, are ordered by His never-failing providence. So intimate is His relationship with the whole creation that a care-less reader might be led toward pantheistic conclusions. Yet individual personalities and second causes are fully recognized, ---not as independent of God, but as having their proper place in His plan. And alongside of this doctrine of His Immanence the Scripture writers also present the kindred doctrine of His Transcendence, in which God is distinctly set forth as entirely separate from and above the whole creation. Yet as regards God's providence we are to understand that He is intimately concerned with every detail in the affairs of men and in the course of nature. "To suppose that anything is too great to be comprehended in His control," says Dr. Charles Hodge, "or anything so minute as to escape His notice; or that the infinitude of particulars can distract His attention, is to forget that God is infinite . . . The sun diffuses its light through all space as easily as upon any point. God is as much present everywhere, and with everything, as though He were only in one place, and had but one object of attention." And again, "He is present in every blade of grass, yet guiding Arcturus in his course, marshalling the stars as a host, calling them by their names; present also in every human soul, giving it understanding, endowing it with gifts, working in it both to will and to do. The human heart is in His hands; and he turneth it even as the rivers of water are turned" (*Systematic Theology*, I, p. 583.) . It is almost universally admitted that God determines when, where, and under what circumstances, each individual of our race shall be born, live, and die, whether it shall be male or female, white or black, wise or foolish. God is no less sovereign in the distribution of His favors. He does what He will with His own. To some He gives riches, to others honor, to others health, to others certain talents for music, oratory, art, finance, statesmanship, etc. Others are poor, unknown, born in dishonor, the victims of disease, and live lives of wretchedness. Some are placed in Christian lands where they receive all the benefits of the Gospel; others live and die in the darkness of heathenism. Some are brought through faith unto salvation; others are left to perish in unbelief. And to a very large extent these external things, which are not the result of individual choice, decide the person's life course and eternal destiny. Both Scripture and every day experience teach us that God gives to some what He withholds from others. If it be asked why He does this, or why he does not save all, the only available answer is found in the words of the Lord Jesus, "Yea, Father, for so it was well pleasing in thy sight." Only the Scripture doctrine of the fall and redemption will give us any light on what we see about us. It is to be remembered that those who receive these gifts, whether spiritual or temporal, receive them through pure grace, while in regard to the others God simply withholds those gifts which He was under no obligation to bestow. Nations, as well as individuals, are thus in the hands of God, who appoints the bounds of their habitation, and controls their destiny. He controls them as absolutely as a man controls a rod or a staff. They are in His hands, and He employs them to accomplish His purposes. He breaks them in pieces as a potter's vessel, or He exalts them to greatness, according to His good pleasure. He gives peace and fruitful seasons, property and happiness, or He sends the desolations of war, famine, drought and pestilence. All of these things are of His disposing, and are designed for intelligent ends under His universal providence. God is no mere spectator of the universe He has made, but is everywhere present and active, the all-sustaining ground, and all-governing power of all that is. Although the price of the sparrow is small, and its flight seems giddy and at random, yet it does not fall to the ground, nor slight anywhere without your Father. "His all-wise providence hath before appointed what bough it shall perch upon; what grains it shall pick up; where it shall lodge and where it shall build; on what it shall live and where it shall die." (Toplady, Preface to Zanchius'

*Predestination*, p. 14.) Every raindrop and every snowflake which falls from the cloud, every insect which moves, every plant which grows, every grain of dust which floats in the air has had certain definite causes and will have certain definite effects. Each is a link in the chain of events and many of the great events of history have turned on these apparently insignificant things. Throughout the whole course of events there is progress toward a predetermined end. Dr. Warfield has well written: "It was not accident that brought Rebecca to the well to welcome Abraham's servant (Gen. 24), or that sent Joseph into Egypt (Gen. 45:8; 50:20, 'God meant it for good'), or guided Pharaoh's daughter to the ark among the flags (Ex. 2), or that, later, directed the millstone that crushed Abimelech's head (Judges 9:53), or winged the arrow shot at a venture to smite the king in the joints of the armor (I Kings 22:34). Every historical event is rather treated as an item in the orderly carrying out of an underlying Divine purpose; and the historian is continually aware of the presence in history of Him who gives even to the lightning a charge to strike the mark (Job 36:32)." (Biblical Doctrines, p. 14.) "In the great railroad stations," said Dr. Clarence E. Macartney, "you can see a metallic pencil come out and write in great characters on the wall the time of the arrival or departure of the trains. The metallic pencil seems to write of itself, but we know that hidden in an office somewhere the mind and hand of a man are operating the pencil. So in our own life, we note our own deliberations and choices and decisions, and yet in the fabric of our destiny there seem to be other strands, strands not of our own weaving. Apparently trivial events play their part in great issues." (Moderator's sermon on Predestination, preached before the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, U.S.A., 1924.) Man's sense of moral responsibility and dependence, and his instinctive appeal to God in times of danger, show how universal and innate is the conviction that God does govern the world and all human events. But while the Bible repeatedly teaches that this providential control is universal, Powerful, wise, and holy, it nowhere attempts to inform us how it is to be reconciled with man's free agency. All that we need to know is that God does govern His creatures and that His control over them is such that no violence is done to their natures. Perhaps the relationship between divine sovereignty and human freedom can best be summed up in these words: God so presents the outside inducements that man acts in accordance with his own nature, yet does exactly what God has planned for him to do. This subject, as it relates to human responsibility, will be more fully treated in the chapter on Free Agency.

### *Scripture Proof*

That this is the Scripture doctrine of Providence is so plain that it is admitted by many whose philosophical views lead them to reject it for themselves. We shall now present a summary of Scripture proof, showing that all events have a divinely appointed place and purpose, that God's providence is universal, and that He thus secures the complete fulfillment of His plans. God's providential control extends over: (a) Nature or the physical world. "Jehovah doeth His will in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet," Nahum 1:3. "Only in the land of Goshen where the children of Israel were, there was no hail," Ex.9:26. "He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust," Matt. 5:45. The famine in Egypt appeared to men to be only the result of natural causes; yet Joseph could say, "The thing is established of God, and God will shortly bring it to pass." Gen. 41:32. "And I also have withholden the rain from you, when there were yet three months before the harvest; and I caused it to rain upon one city, and caused it not to rain upon another city," Amos 4:7. "He gave you from heaven rains and fruitful seasons, filling your heart with food and gladness," Acts 14:17. "Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance?" Is. 40:12. (b) The animal creation. "Are not two sparrows sold for a penny and not one of them shall fall to the ground without your Father," Matt. 10:29. "Behold the birds of the heavens, that they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; and your heavenly Father feedeth them," Matt. 6:26. "My God hath sent His angel and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me," Daniel 6:22. "The young lions roar after their prey, and seek their meat from God," Ps. 104:21. "Thus God hath taken away the cattle of your father (Laban) and given them to me" (Jacob), Gen. 31:9. (c) Nations. (Nebuchadnezzar's humiliation was) "to the intent that the living may know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will, and setteth up over it the lowest of men,"

Dan. 4:17. "Behold, the nations are as a drop in the bucket, and are accounted as the small dust of the balance; behold, He taketh up the isles as a very little thing," Is. 40:15. "Let them say among the nation Jehovah reigneth," I Chr. 16:31. "For God Is the King of all the earth," Ps. 47:7. "He changeth the times and the seasons; He removeth kings, and setteth up kings," Daniel 2:21. "Jehovah bringeth the counsel of the nations to naught; He maketh the thoughts of the people to be of none effect," Ps. 33:10. "And Jehovah gave them rest round about .... Jehovah delivered all their enemies into their hands," Joshua 21:44. "And the children of Israel did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah; and Jehovah delivered them into the hands of Midian seven years," Ju. 6:1. 'Shall evil befall a city, and Jehovah hath not done it?' Amos 3:6. "For, lo, I raise up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation, that march through the breadth of the earth, to possess dwelling places that are not theirs," Hab. 1:6. (d) Individual men. "The king's heart is in the hand of Jehovah as the watercourses; He turneth it whithersoever He will," Prov. 21:1. "A man's goings are established of Jehovah," Ps. 37:23. "A man's heart deviseth his way, but the Lord directeth his steps," Prov. 16:9. "For we ought to say, if the Lord will, we shall both live, and do this or that," James 4:15. "Of Him, and through Him, and unto Him are all things," Rom. 11:36. "Who maketh thee to differ? And what hast thou that thou didst not receive?" I Cor. 4:7. "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him, And delivereth them," Ps. 34:7. "If it be so our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace; and He will deliver us out of thy hand, O king," Daniel 3:17. "Jehovah is on my side; I shall not fear; What can man do unto me?" Ps. 118:6. But now, O Jehovah, thou art our Father; we are the clay and thou our potter; and we are the work of thy hands," Is. 64:8. "And the hand of our God was upon us, and He delivered us (the returning exiles) from the hand of the enemy and the liar-in-wait by the way," Ezra 8:31. "And God brought their counsel to naught," Nehemiah 4:15. "But against any of the children of Israel shall not a dog move his tongue, against man or bent; that ye way know how Jehovah doth make a distinction between the Egyptians and Israel," Ex. 11:7. "And the Lord said unto Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak and hold not thy peace; for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to harm thee," Acts 18:9. (e) The free acts of men. "It is God who worketh in you both to will and to work, for His good pleasure," Phil. 2:13. "And Jehovah gave the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they let them have what they asked." Ex.12:36. "And the king (of Persia, Artaxerxes) granted him (Ezra) all his request, according to the hand of Jehovah his God upon him," Ezra 7:6. "For Jehovah had made them joyful, and had turned the heart of the king of Assyria unto them, to strengthen their hands in the work of the house of God" (rebuilding the temple), Ezra 6:22. "And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep mine ordinances, and do them," Ezek. 36:27. (f) The sinful acts of men. "For of a truth in this city against thy holy servant Jesus, whom thou didst anoint, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, and the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together, to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel foreordained to come to pass," Acts 4:27, 28. "Jesus answered him (Pilate), Thou wouldst have no power against me, except it were given thee from above," John 19:11. (David, rebuking Abishai, in regard to Shimei) "Because he curseth, and Jehovah bath said, Curse David.... Let him alone, and let him curse; for Jehovah bath bidden him" 2 Sam. 16:10, 11. "Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee; and the residue of wrath shalt thou gird upon thee' (or restrain), Ps. 76:10. "And I, behold I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians and they shall go in (the Red Sea) after them; and I will get me honor upon Pharaoh, and upon all his host, and upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen," Ex. 14:17.

### 3. The Foreknowledge of God

The Arminian objection against foreordination bears with equal force against the foreknowledge of God. What God foreknows must, in the very nature of the case, be as fixed and certain as what is foreordained; and if one is inconsistent with the free agency of man, the other is also. Foreordination renders the events certain, while foreknowledge presupposes that they are certain.

Now if future events are foreknown to God, they cannot by any possibility take a turn contrary to His knowledge. If the course of future events is foreknown, history will follow that course as definitely as a locomotive follows the rails from

New York to Chicago. The Arminian doctrine, in rejecting foreordination, rejects the theistic basis for foreknowledge. Common sense tells us that no event can be foreknown unless by some means, either physical or mental, it has been predetermined. Our choice as to what determines the certainty of future events narrows down to two alternatives -- the foreordination of the wise and merciful heavenly Father, or the working of blind, physical fate. The Socinians and Unitarians, while not so evangelical as the Arminians, are at this point more consistent; for after rejecting the foreordination of God, they also deny that He can foreknow the acts of free agents. They hold that in the very nature of the case it cannot be known how the person will act until the time comes and the choice is made. This view of course reduces the prophecies of Scripture to shrewd guesses at best, and destroys the historic Christian view of the Inspiration of the Scriptures. It is a view which has never been held by any recognized Christian church. Some of the Socinians and Unitarians have been bold enough and honest enough to acknowledge that the reason which led them to deny God's certain foreknowledge of the future acts of men, was, that if this be admitted it would be impossible to disprove the Calvinistic doctrine of Predestination.

Many Arminians have felt the force of this argument, and while they have not followed the Unitarians in denying God's foreknowledge, they have made it plain that they would very willingly deny it if they could, or dared. Some have spoken disparagingly of the doctrine of foreknowledge and have intimated that, in their opinion, it was not of much importance whether one believed it or not. Some have gone so far as to tell us plainly that men had better reject foreknowledge than admit Predestination. Others have suggested that God may voluntarily neglect to know some of the acts of men in order to leave them free; but this of course destroys the omniscience of God. Still others have suggested that God's omniscience may imply only that He can know all things, if He chooses ---just as His omnipotence implies that He can do all things, if He chooses. But the comparison will not hold, for these certain acts are not merely possibilities but realities, although yet future; and to ascribe ignorance to God concerning these is to deny Him the attribute of omniscience. This explanation would give us the absurdity of an omniscience that is not omniscient.

When the Arminian is confronted with the argument from the foreknowledge of God, he has to admit the certainty or fixity of future events. Yet when dealing with the problem of free agency he wishes to maintain that the acts of free agents are uncertain and ultimately dependent on the choice of the person --- which is plainly an inconsistent position. A view which holds that the free acts of men are uncertain, sacrifices the sovereignty of God in order to preserve the freedom of men.

Furthermore, if the acts of free agents are in themselves uncertain, God must then wait until the event has had its issue before making His plans. In trying to convert a soul, then He would be conceived of as working in the same manner that Napoleon is said to have gone into battle-with three or four plans in mind, so that if the first failed, he could fall back upon the second, and if that failed, then the third, and so on --- a view which is altogether inconsistent with a true view of His nature. He would then be ignorant of much of the future and would daily be gaining vast stores of knowledge. His government of the world also, in that case, would be very uncertain and changeable, dependent as it would be on the unforeseen conduct of men.

To deny God the perfections of foreknowledge and immutability is to represent Him as a disappointed and unhappy being who is often checkmated and defeated by His creatures. But who can really believe that in the presence of man the Great Jehovah must sit waiting, inquiring, "What will he do?" Yet unless Arminianism denies the foreknowledge of God, it stands defenseless before the logical consistency of Calvinism; for foreknowledge implies certainty and certainty implies foreordination.

Speaking through the prophet Isaiah the Lord said: "I am God, and there is none like me; declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done; saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my

pleasure," Is. 46:10. "Thou understandest my thoughts afar off," said the psalmist, 139:2. He "knoweth the heart," Acts 15:8. "There is no creature that is not manifest in His sight; but all things are naked and laid open before the eyes of Him with whom we have to do," Heb. 4:13.

Much of the difficulty in regard to the doctrine of Predestination is due to the finite character of our mind, which can grasp only a few details at a time, and which understands only a part of the relations between these. We are creatures of time, and often fail to take into consideration the fact that God is not limited as we are. That which appears to us as "past..... present," and "future," is all "present" to His mind. It is an eternal "now." He is "the high and lofty One that inhabits eternity," Is. 57:15. "A thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, And as a watch in the night," Ps. 90:4. Hence the events which we see coming to pass in time are only the events which He appointed and set before Him from eternity. Time is a property of the finite creation and is objective to God. He is above it and sees it, but is not conditioned by it. He is also independent of space, which is another property of the finite creation. Just as He sees at one glance a road leading from New York to San Francisco, while we see only a small portion of it as we pass over it, so He sees all events in history, past, present, and future at one glance. When we realize that the complete process of history is before Him as an eternal "now," and that He is the Creator of all finite existence, the doctrine of Predestination at least becomes an easier doctrine.

In the eternal ages back of the creation there could not have been any certainty as to future events unless God had formed a decree in regard to them. Events pass from the category of things that may or may not be, to that of things that shall certainly be, or from possibility to fruition, only when God passes a decree to that effect. This fixity or certainty could have had its ground in nothing outside of the divine Mind, for in eternity nothing else existed. Says Dr. R. L. Dabney: "The only way in which any object can by any possibility have passed from God's vision of the possible into His foreknowledge of the actual, is by His purposing to effectuate it Himself, or intentionally and purposely to permit its effectuation by some other agent whom He expressly purposed to bring into existence. This is clear from this fact. An effect conceived in posse only rises into actuality by virtue of an efficient cause or causes. When God was looking forward from the point of view of His original infinite prescience, there was but one cause, Himself. If any other cause or agent is ever to arise, it must be by God's agency. If effects are embraced in God's infinite prescience, which these other agents are to produce, still, in willing these other agents into existence, with infinite prescience, God did virtually will into existence, or purpose, all the effects of which they were to be efficient." (Theology, P. 212)

And to the same effect the Baptist theologian, Dr. A. B. Strong, who for a number of years was President and Professor in the Rochester Theological Seminary, writes: "In eternity there could have been no cause of the future existence of the universe, outside of God Himself, since no being existed but God Himself. In eternity God foresaw that the creation of the world and the Institution of its laws would make certain its actual history even to the most insignificant details. But God decreed to create and to institute these laws. In so decreeing He necessarily decreed all that was to come. In fine, God foresaw the future events of the universe as certain, because He had decreed to create; but this determination to create involved also a determination of all the actual results of that creation; or, in other words, God decreed those results."

Foreknowledge must not be confused with foreordination. Foreknowledge presupposes foreordination, but is not itself foreordination. The actions of free agents do not take place because they are foreseen, but they are foreseen because they are certain to take place. Hence Strong says, "Logically, though not chronologically, decree comes before foreknowledge. When I say, 'I know what I will do,' it is evident that I have determined already, and that my knowledge does not precede determination, but follows it and is based upon it."

Since God's foreknowledge is complete, He knows the destiny of every person, not merely before the person has made his



choice in this life, but from eternity. And since He knows their destiny before they are created, and then proceeds to create, it is plain that the saved and the lost alike fulfill His plan for them; for if He did not plan that any particular ones should be lost, He could at least refrain from creating them.

We conclude, then, that the Christian doctrine of the Foreknowledge of God proves also His Predestination. Since these events are foreknown, they are fixed and settled things; and nothing can have fixed and settled them except the good pleasure of God --- the great first cause --- freely and unchangeably foreordaining whatever comes to pass. The whole difficulty lies in the acts of free agents being certain; yet certainty is required for foreknowledge as well as for foreordination. The Arminian arguments, if valid, would disprove both foreknowledge and foreordination. And since they prove too much we conclude that they prove nothing at all.

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