

APPENDIX I

PREDESTINARIANISM

There are some Christians who have developed an interpretation of Predestination that ends up denying one or both of the two fundamental premises discussed above: namely, God's desire for the salvation of all and man's enduring freedom of will.¹ Their interpretation allows for a solution to the problem of God's predestining and man's free-will that can, admittedly, appear an attractive alternative on account of its logical elegance and rational consistency. But it leads, in the end, to absurd and even monstrous conclusions. Such are the Calvinists, who follow the lead of Jean Calvin, a sixteenth-century French reformer, who was himself developing conclusions St. Augustine had developed some ten centuries earlier. This interpretation is sometimes called Predestinarianism.²

According to this interpretation, God does not predestine man because of anything He foreknows of him; rather, he predestines him based upon his own inscrutable choice. Moreover, to those whom He predestines He bestows an *irresistible grace*, that makes man, of a necessity, come to love God and persevere in that love such that he will enter into the Kingdom of heaven. Man can do nothing to be predestined, but neither can he, if predestined, do anything to fall away.

But this raises some problems. If, on the one hand, predestination is not dependent in some way on God's foreknowledge of man's choice, but only on His own inscrutable choice; and if, on the other, His predestination cannot in any way be thwarted, then one of two things must be true: either God must force the will of the one chosen, so that, even despite himself, he believes and delights in God. Or God, by an act of His grace, must so free from the bonds of sin the will of the man chosen that it naturally turns to and delights in God.

¹ Free indeed, though only able to choose the good by means of God's grace, a grace which is always presupposed. See the discussion above, pp. 17-18.

² It is inspired primarily by a misunderstanding of Paul's discussion of election in Romans, chapters 9-11. For the meaning of this passage, see Appendix II.

The first is an act of violence to man's will and is on that basis repugnant. The second certainly seems less objectionable. But in both cases, we are led to the question, Why does God not free the will of all men in order that all men may be saved? The only answer possible is because He does not will that all men be saved, a position in direct opposition to the testimony of the Scriptures.³ Carried to its logical conclusion, this leads to the assertion that as God has predestined some men to glory, so too He has expressly predestined some to damnation.⁴

Moreover, as the Scriptures seem to make it plain that the elect are a much smaller number than the damned,⁵ this means ultimately that, since God had the means to save them, means He used elsewhere, but has deliberately chosen not to, He has expressly created the greater part of humanity for eternal torment in gehenna. But the Church finds such a conclusion reprehensible, and knows that this cannot be true of the God whom she has both known and loved.⁶

When we further reflect that there are saints who have come to love every man even as they love themselves, thus fulfilling the evangelical command, and that they have longed for the salvation of all men, even the greatest sinners, then a further absurdity results: these saints have shown an unconditional love purer than God's. Of course, the Protestants do not have saints, and so have no living reflection of God's character. For this reason, perhaps it can be understood why they might adopt this interpretation. But the Church knows better, and so can never accept such a solution.

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³ *v.* I Tim. 2:4

⁴ It also leads logically to the belief in a limited atonement, *i.e.*, that Christ died only for some men (the elect) and not for all.

⁵ "Many are called," our Lord says, "but few are chosen" (Matt. 22:14); also, "And some one said to Him, "Lord, will those who are saved be few?" And He said to them, "Strive to enter by the narrow door; for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able" (Luke 13:23-4).

⁶ *v.* St. Gregory Palamas' discussion of this in his *Hom.* 41.2-8.