

PREDESTINATION AND HUMAN PRUDENCE

PART TWO*

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The Human Predicament

The doctrine of total human depravity, grounded from Augustine to Aquinas and which grew up through Luther and Calvin, rose initially out of the concept of original sin. Luther asserted that no matter what we do, we will remain utterly alienated from God due to our sinful nature. We are therefore absolutely incapable of doing what is necessary to overcome this alienation and be saved. In the light of this doctrine, efforts on the part of a person to shun evil as a sin against the Lord are mere vanities. Augustine described this situation as the “human predicament.” The essential aspect of this predicament of depravity and original sin is that man is unable to choose God. It is God, then, who reaches out to His elect, those whom He only could have foreordained that He would save in the midst of their sin, rebellion, and alienation, and provides the solution to the human predicament—vicarious atonement of the elect alone through the death of His Son.

According to the Christian reformed, predestination is God’s grace. It is a false and pernicious doctrine based exclusively on sensual perceptions, but now the cyst of the Predestination ENTAMOEBIA is in the intestine, the first stage of the infestation.

Predestination became a popular and widespread belief in the church as God’s answer to the human predicament but ultimately created another predicament of its own. Calvin assures the elect

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that they will receive a token of their status by being called, or what he refers to as vocation. Another indication of election is justification. These tokens are highly subjective and gave rise to a predisposition toward a variety of tortured introspection that was associated with religious experience.

This introspection was not self-examination in order that a person might be convicted of sin, for such examination was meaningless. All men, even the elect were totally depraved and thus powerless to shun evil. Rather it was a form of introspection to see if God was providing evidence of vocation by visiting with “saving faith” that would provide justification. For justification was by faith alone, but even this faith was a gift from God. In the age of colonization, the reformed religions were given freedom from state interference in the new world, and puritan America became a significant arena for the application of this vital religious pursuit. Gradually, the preoccupation with seeking subjective evidence of election was challenged by political concerns that while Christians in the new colonies were engaged in such introspective and otherworldly interests, burly sinners would take over the emerging commonwealth.⁴

Further, the subjective search for saving faith, or simply waiting to be visited with it, was an exhausting and all-consuming exercise for the simple reason that a person’s whole eternity depended on it. Without the tokens of election all hope is gone. One writer on the subject at the time observed, “There is ground for believing that by this dread apprehension the reason of many has been dethroned.”⁵ Another token of God’s election was conceived: If a person were a member of the elect, it follows that God would bless the favored and ignore or despoil the reprobate. Prosperity became evidence of God’s favor, a means of visible justification thus solving the mystery of election. In consequence of this, people worked hard to see if God would bless them in their labors. A work ethic appeared in

protestant doctrine, a work ethic based on a necessary visible reward, the appropriation of material wealth from one's efforts that was the tangible evidence of God's favor, grace and election. The stage was set for the open scrutiny and evaluation of people's spiritual destiny and consequent worth according to how materially fortunate or unfortunate they were.

The Predestination ENTAMOEBA has now entered the bloodstream, the second stage of the infestation, and is residing in the liver. The capacity to differentiate between good and evil affections is diminishing.

The idea of a favored elect with or without its religious roots, especially in the context of economic opportunities available in the virgin continent of the new world, promoted a gospel of success. This was interwoven with social and cultural forces which fueled the growth of unbridled capitalism from which a spirit of competition was also sustained. Rigidly predestinarian sects were glorying in their doctrine even to the point where charitable impulses were considered unnecessary. These "hard case" or "hard shell" predestinarians based their rather callous lack of compassion on the belief that individual or collective human action could have no effect on changing what was already determined by "the eternal decree of God."

This predestinarian fatalism may seem completely incongruous with other established ideals of religious charity, but this was an age where mercantilism and colonialism needed a justification of their own for subjugation and slavery. The disposability of indigenous peoples, initially based on sub-human classifications, was later justified by the expedient opinion that God had predestined them to eternal damnation for having been "excluded from the knowledge of His name" as Calvin had said. Through the teachings of Comte de Gobineau, a nineteenth-century French aristocrat and anthropologist, predestination took on distinct overtones of selective racial

superiority. Hitler and Nazism borrowed much from Gobineau's ideology. Gobineau's "Essay on the Inequality of the Human Races" (1853) was a doctrine of destined racial superiority that has been called "the Calvinism of raceology, real predestination."⁶

The Predestination ENTAMOEBA has now migrated to the lungs, the third stage of the infestation, and the ability to differentiate between truth and falsity is fading.

It was at this time in 1859 that Darwin set the religious and scientific worlds upside down with the notion that nature itself was the driving and organizing force behind life. The appearance and organization of species was explained as the outcome of random mutations that promoted adaptability to the natural environment according to the laws of its order. Darwin, troubled by the dichotomy of beauty and brutality, preferred to withhold total commitment to design as it could not reconcile the nature of a benevolent God who either could not or would not eliminate suffering in a world where everything was determined. This dilemma is an echo of Swedenborg's warning that predestination attributes evil to God (*True Christian Religion* 486). Evolution overthrew the essence of theological predestination but could not engage the chaos of pure chance as a determining force. If anything akin to predestination existed, it could be expressed in the concept of natural selection, a form of natural predestination that reflected the physical laws governing the process of evolution, even though natural selection as a neutral mechanism did not actually "pre-determine" any specific outcome. Nevertheless, natural selection, if such a mechanism even exists, was about to be aided by the helping hand of human prudence approaching its worst.

The concepts of evolution and natural selection originating in England were applied to biology by Darwin and later to social organization and other disciplines by Herbert Spencer, whose

fame at the time rivaled that of Darwin. Indeed, it was Spencer who coined the phrase “survival of the fittest” in developing and applying evolutionary theory to philosophy, psychology, and the study of society; hence we have the term “social Darwinism” and all its implications.

The mechanism for passing on those advantages conferred by natural selection was the new science of heredity. Heredity also had an impact on the social as well as the physical sciences. A leading figure in this study was Sir Francis Galton, a cousin of Darwin, who by statistical methods purported that mental traits are no less inherited than are physical characteristics. In his book, *Hereditary Genius* (1869), he used the word “genius” to denote “an ability that was exceptionally high and at the same time inborn.”⁷

Galton went further to found the ideas of human eugenics, a term meaning “well born,” the nineteenth-century scientific term for the religious idea of the elect. The eugenics movement, which exploded in England and the United States, was dedicated to scientific endeavors to increase the proportion of persons with better than average genetic endowment. This was to be accomplished through selective mating of marriage partners based on the heritability of intelligence and personality, a kind of social predestination governed by human prudence completely oblivious to the source and purpose of conjugal love.

It is interesting to relate that Galton wrote an article on the efficacy of prayer.⁸ In his article he noted that the vast preponderance of the population in all public gatherings said a prayer for the long life of the sovereign. Yet the life span of sovereigns was demonstrably lower than that of the average population. Therefore the efficacy of prayer was statistically unsubstantiated. Such was the inclination at the time to apply scientific and mathematical methods to spiritual principles or to impose human prudence over Divine providence, an indicator that the ability to differentiate truth from falsity was crumbling.

Evolution was a slow process that is only possible in the context of an inconceivable span of time. On the other hand, the science and the practice of eugenics provided an answer for the purposeful strengthening and preservation of the race in a way that random natural selection could not, unless natural selection was deployed through human prudence. “We cannot doubt,” Galton wrote, “the existence of a great power ready at hand and capable of being directed with vast benefit as soon as we have learned to understand and apply it.”⁹

The Predestination ENTAMOEBA has now crossed the blood brain barrier and is in the brain.

Inevitably it was clear that defining genius, or exceptionally high ability in all its varied forms was a foreboding task. Even if eugenics could isolate via heredity certain genius or inborn ability and promote it through selective breeding, then what abilities should be promoted and in how many? Within evolutionary doctrine, extinction itself was a proof of evolutionary failure. Instead of forcing evolutionary successes artificially, when those outcomes are hard to predict, why not concentrate on eliminating those elements that are easily identified as evolutionary failures such as the mentally ill? For if genius was an inborn trait so was its opposite.

The eugenics movement won substantial recognition in early twentieth-century America which became the first country to enact compulsory sterilization as part of its eugenics program. By 1941, 33 US states had endorsed sterilization policies. The number of people involuntarily sterilized in the United States as a result of these policies was 64,000. Other western governments, including Canada, Sweden, Australia, and others, were engaging in the same policies toward those considered defective.

The policy of Nazi Germany towards “defectives” was much more severe. Commencing in 1933 within six years, under The Nazi Act for Averting Descendants Afflicted with Hereditary Diseases, 375,000 forced sterilizations were carried out, almost

one in every hundred German citizens. In the United States, in 1935, Dr. Alexis Carrel, a French-American Nobel Prize winner for medicine in 1912, who had been on the staff of the Rockefeller Institute for medical research since its inception, published his book *Man the Unknown*. Within three years it had been translated into nine languages other than English. It was reprinted fifty times.

In his last chapter, “The Remaking of Man,” Carrel repeatedly looks to eugenics as the solution to the ills of society. He suggests the removal of the mentally ill and the criminal by euthanasia.

The predestination ENTAMOEBA has now incapacitated the reception of Love and Wisdom.

In Germany, the systematic murder of people considered to be biologically unfit to live began in the mental hospitals and was initiated and wholly endorsed by the medical establishment, mostly by psychiatrists actively applying the principles of eugenics. Hitler was not principally a Darwinist as even a cursory reading of *Mein Kampf* will reveal, a fact that proponents of evolution enjoy and are perhaps obliged to point out. His sense of mission arose from the idea that God had predestined Aryan blood to supremacy as the “highest image of the Lord.”¹⁰ In either case, those who believe that Nature or God is in need of their help still represent the effort of corrupt and self-serving human prudence to bring about the forced outcome of some form of predestination that benefits the self-nominated elect, as they define those ideas according to their own intentions and self love. It matters little if they are the Eugenicists in their belief that the [scientific] “development of the human personality is the ultimate purpose of civilization”¹¹ or the Nazi purists “fighting for the work of the Lord”¹² who sought the “fulfillment of the mission allotted it by the Creator of universe.”¹³

The theological concept of predestination that tried to reconcile the spiritual dichotomy of good and evil by establishing a parallel natural dichotomy of a vested and pitiless elect and a worthless residue of abandoned reprobates went through religious, economic, social, scientific, racial, and medical iterations to produce the holocaust that started in the mental hospitals. Predestination unleashed and validated the love of domination that always flows from the unbounded love of self. What would it take for men to see this great evil that arose from a religious doctrine based on merely sensual perceptions? In my view, it would take a world war, a war that was permitted by the Lord so this great evil could be seen for what it was.

When the allied armies liberated the concentration camps, the horror shocked the world and still does. In fact, the Nazis were only doing what the British, American, and French academics had unleashed on the world in their ideological movements of social Darwinism, survival of the fittest, racial supremacy and eugenics; movements that had their root in the pernicious doctrine of predestination.

If we may draw comparisons from the progressive degeneration caused in the body by a pathogenic protozoan to the mechanism of evil, as I have tried to do, then we are left to contemplate the following:

Evil is introduced from sensory interaction with a contaminated environment or with the environment in a contaminated way and worms its way in to reside in the lowest sense impressions that we have. It will grow to diminish the capacity to differentiate between heavenly and selfish affections. Affections arising in accord with those negative sensory experiences will attempt to appropriate false ideas, which then surreptitiously become the core beliefs of a person, an institution or a society. These core beliefs are essentially lies from hell.

Ultimately, the effect is to debilitate the capacity for receptivity of Love and Wisdom from the Lord. This is spiritual death.

The process is reversed in precisely the opposite way. The core beliefs, like the walls of Jericho, protect the evil that resides within the affections. The walls, the false ideas that protect evil affections, must come down. The children of Israel feared entering the Promised Land on account of the giants and walled cities they spied there. By circling the walled city and blowing the trumpet of the Lord's truth, the children of Israel demonstrated for us the process of discovering the truth as it applies to us. The shout that was issued after the sound of the trumpet represents the appropriation of the truth that we are able to see into our will, thus giving us a voice. Then we will have the capacity, strengthened by our understanding of the truth from the Word, to shun evils as sins against the Lord. The shout brought the walls down. The evil that was protected behind those walls was then exposed in order that it could be destroyed.

References:

⁴ For more information on the conflict within the early Puritan establishment see the trial of Anne Hutchinson who was banished from the Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1636

⁵ Allen C, Guelzo citing James Ross, *Abraham Lincoln Redeemer President*, (Grand Rapids: William B Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999), 37

⁶ Feliks Loneczny, *On the plurality of Civilizations* (London, Polonica publications, 1962), 141

⁷ Francis Galton. *Hereditary Genius, An Inquiry into its laws and Consequences*, second edition. (London: Macmillan and Co. 1892)

⁸ Francis Galton. *Statistical inquiries into the efficacy of prayer*, (Fortnightly review, 1872) pp 125-135

⁹ Francis Galton. *Essays on Eugenics—The possible improvement of the human breed*, (London: The Eugenics Education Society, 1909), 33-34

¹⁰ Adolph Hitler. *Mein Kampf* (Volume 2 Chapter 1 Philosophy and party)

¹¹ Alexis Carrel *The remaking of Man*. Chapter 8, section 12 (Harper & Brothers, 1935)

¹² Adolph Hitler. *Mein Kampf* (Volume 1 Chapter 8, The beginning of my political activity)

¹³ Adolph Hitler. *Mein Kampf* (Volume 1 Chapter 2, Years of studying and suffering in Vienna)

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