

On Divine Nescience

a letter by Bird Weaver

Morgantown, KY to *the Messenger* (GB) 4-5-1889

Brother Cox I am truly glad, always glad, to get the Messenger. I look over its columns rapidly and read it in preference to all else. In looking over last week's paper, my eyes fell on Brother Josephus Lee's article. Although brother Lee is nearly one hundred miles from me, and too far for me to extend my right hand of fellowship, and I do not expect to see him until the third Sunday in October, yet I wish to shake hands with him then, and tell him I endorse his article out and out.

During February there appeared an essay written and read by Brother Malloy of the Freewill Baptists, (and I suppose endorsed by them) in which the strange Brother attempts to prove the foreknowledge of God, and separate the same from predestination. Although the article is able, perhaps as strong as could be written on that subject, yet when I read it and reread it, I could not see any scriptural proof or light the good brother had produced to establish his position. I am frank to say he produced none whatever to my mind; nor do I believe he or any other man can draw the line between unconditional foreknowledge and unconditional predestination. The word foreknowledge is to be found in two places in the Bible: Acts 2:25 and 1 Peter 1:2. The meaning is to know a thing beforehand. The word "foreknew" is to be found in two places: Romans 8:29 and 11:2, and means, says Dr. Young, to begin to know first, or beforehand. Upon these four passages of scripture we must bear all we write or preach upon the foreknowledge of God. Hence, the necessity of carefulness upon our part lest we write or preach something God's word will not sustain. As to what God knew or did not know before the foundation of the world, I know not, for God has given me no method of knowing, nor do I care to know, for it is no business of mine.

It is enough for me to know that God is a God of infinite mercy and compassion, and that He demands strict obedience, and when we begin to pry into His foreknowledge, we show ourselves as undutiful subjects, for He has said secret things belong unto the Lord our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and our children forever, that way may do all the words of this law. (Deut. 29:29) Now I do not believe in predestination, but I do believe in man's responsibility to God, and that He has a just right to punish us for each thought, word or act of rebellion. So I desire to ask, for information, if the scripture quoted by Brother Malloy, Rom. 8:29, does not prove too much for Brother Malloy's position. Let us read: "For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate [to be] conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren." Is it not certain that God foreknew, at least a part of Adam's race, and did He not predestinate each all that He foreknew to be conformed to the image of His Son? Is it not clear that God's predestination extended to all He foreknew, and if so, (we call up Brother Lee's first question), could they resist being conformed to the image of God's son when backed by both, the foreknowledge and predestination of God? Rom 8:30 says, "Moreover whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He

called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified." The new version (RV) uses the word "foreordained" instead of the word "predestinate." The emphatic Diaglot or Greek Testament renders those two verse as follows: "Because those whom He foreknew He also predestinated to be copies of the likeness of His Son, for him to be the first born among many heathens; and those whom He predestinated He also united and who He united, those He justified; and whom He justified, He also glorified." Now let us take either translation and the results are the same. If we apply this scripture to the church, or a part of the church, or to the whole of Adam's race, we still have the same result, and all those that God's foreknowledge reaches. God's predestination, foreordained and predetermined to be conformed to the likeness of His Son, and He called or invited each one that He foreknew, He did not only invite, but He justified; and not only justified, but He glorified them. If this is not correct, let Brother Malloy or Brother Cox answer. Hence, if you apply this foreknowledge of God to all mankind, and rest it upon the scripture quoted, we must have a universal salvation, and if so man can prevent or aid it. If we take Brother Malloy's view of the foreknowledge of God and apply it to every man before the foundation of the world, then we have every man, woman and child predetermined, predestinated, foreordained to the likeness of God's son and glory.

Now if I understand Brother Malloy's position, it is that God's foreknowledge was a complete before the beginning of time as now, and that this foreknowledge has nothing to do with man's destiny. God created Adam and Eve and put them in the garden and forbade their eating of its fruits but they did eat and God punished them for so doing. Yet the Lord knew before their creation what they would do; knew when He planted that tree; knew when He made Adam an imperfect being; knew how to have made him a perfect being; knew all the suffering that would follow Adam's rash act; had full and complete knowledge of it all before He took the first step in creation, and had full knowledge to have had it different, if wisdom had wished it different. Brother Malloy, if this be true, tell us where the responsibility is.

We see in Gen. 6:5 "And GOD saw that the wickedness of man [was] great in the earth, and [that] every imagination of the thoughts of his heart [was] only evil continually." Does it not occur to your mind dear readers, that if God had foreknew all this as well before the foundation of the world as He did at the time He looked down and discovered man's wickedness, that He had been all of time and all of eternity grieving at heart, and repenting not that He had already made man, but away down at the dawn of time He would make man, and he would sin, and He would then punish him. But I have written enough at this time, and perhaps too much; but let me ask your pardon, dear editor and readers, for saying that I do not endorse Brother Malloy's position, for there can be no line drawn between unconditional foreknowledge and unconditional predestination, and it is my honest conviction that we are wasting time trying to explain what God knew or did not know back behind, or before the light we have in God's word on this subject, and we should be content ourselves in viewing and studying the things God has revealed to us -- the things pertaining to our everyday life and our salvation, for it is very evident that we are called upon to choose whom we will serve. If God be God, serve him; if Baal, serve him. Man may get up a very beautiful story concerning the foreknowledge of God, and he

may please the ear with his theory, but undoubtedly it is best for us to preach what we know; that God's word helps us to understand and reveals to us. Preach that Christ made wisdom, and righteousness, and justification, and sanctification for us. I remain a seeker after more revealed light.