

CHAPTER ONE

DESTINY

As seconds lengthen into minutes, minutes into hours and hours into days the condition of every individual alters from time to time on earth.

The channel through which each individual realises daily experiences of life is often called “DESTINY”. The alteration of condition is a function of the transient movement of time. When the going is rough and tough, among most these consolation statements are heard;

“No condition is permanent”.

“Destiny can never be changed”.

What then is Destiny? Is it a condition or state attributed only to life and its experiences?

Encarta dictionary 2009 describes destiny as “the apparently predetermined and inevitable series of events that happen to somebody or something; A force or agency that determines what will happen; Preordain that somebody will have a particular fate or something will have a particular use; An inner realizable purpose of life.

Destiny according to Advance Learner’s dictionary of current English “is the power that is supposed to control events; fate; what happens to a person or thing in the end especially what is thought to be determined in advance”.

Furthermore, according to Word Web dictionary destiny is an event or course of events that will inevitably happen in future; the ultimate agency regarded as predetermining the course of events; your overall circumstance or condition in life (including everything that happens to you).

All these acceptable definitions of destiny depend on individual perspective. Some see it as an instance, others as circumstance yet some others see it as a force. Destiny in plain language is fate or luck. Whatever happens to man and his surrounding is destiny and was destined to happen.

Mike Omoleye in his book “You can control your destiny” believes that destiny can be altered if man puts his WILL power into effective use. Adewale Thompson categorised destiny in his book “The Invisible World” to be of two types: individual and cosmic. He referred individual destiny to the action of man’s will or that freedom of action granted man by nature to shape his life according to his desire. Cosmic destiny he called that part of man’s life which has been fixed by immutable laws for example it is part of cosmic destiny that person is born into a particular family and in a particular town and a particular time.

It is obvious that nothing can change “cosmic destiny” but the “individual destiny” corresponds to Mike Omoleye’s belief. You can only change the effect of cosmic destiny - advantageously or otherwise.

A friend of mine sees destiny as “a route to a destination”. I asked, if destiny is just the route, what then is the destination called? Giving an instance, he said “if I will to be an engineer. I only need to enrol into a technical school, work hard and graduate as an engineer”. Here the destination is to be an engineer. But life continues after becoming an engineer, so does destiny continue. For Mike Omoleye my friend has altered his destiny from being an illiterate to an engineer by effective use of his will power. WILL is part of the vast freedom granted man by God which man can utilise or misuse. Everything that happened along the route, the route itself and the destination are all “destiny” and are destined to be so because they happened. So for destiny to be certain it must be past.

Destiny is a process; it is cause and its effect.

CHAPTER TWO

PREDESTINATION

Common sense will tell you that there will be fire outbreak when you throw a lit match stick into a tank of gasoline. You can predestine the consequence of your action –fire outbreak and cannot do same for the exact extent of damage to be caused by your action. In the rule of nature, it is known that the day follows the night.

Predestination, the teaching in Christian theology that the eternal destiny of a person is predetermined by God's unchangeable decree. It believes that God has preordained every event throughout eternity (including the final salvation of mankind). Predestination does not necessarily imply a denial of free will. It was your free will to light the match stick and then throw it into the gasoline tank. Most exponents of this doctrine have maintained that it is only the individual's final destiny that is predetermined, the individual's actions which remain free.

How then do we ascertain final destiny? If I had thrown an unlighted match stick into the gasoline, would there be an outbreak? Or that I lighted the match stick and blew off the flame, there still will be no outbreak. There is no such thing like final destiny, every moment or action or event has been destined. At every moment or event the end exists. The "end" is continuous.

Christian theology has predestination as of two forms; single and double. The understanding that God grants the gift of his presence and love as an act of sheer grace brings about single predestination. This gift is independently willed by Him and is in no sense a response to some human act. It is asserted that relation to God depends only on God and on God's eternal decree established before the foundation of the world.

“For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified”.(Romans 8:29-30).

Double predestination is a conclusion deduced from single predestination. If some are to enjoy God’s presence by His eternal decree, others must then be eternally separated from God also by His decree. Because salvation and glory are predestined, it follows that condemnation and destruction must also be predestined. St. Augustine was the first to enunciate this doctrine in the 5th Century, and then John Calvin (a French reformer) clearly stated “we call predestination God’s eternal decree by which He determined within Himself what He willed to become of each man. For all are not created in equal condition; rather eternal is foreordained for some, eternal damnation for others”. The gospel according to St. Luke says “Truly I tell you, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God.” (Luke 9:27)

This doctrine has been rejected and criticized by Roman Catholic and Anglican theologians, insisting that no predestination to evil exists and that whoever suffers damnation bears full responsibility for it. To man death is evil yet Jesus preordained that some will not taste death while some will die before the judgment day. We must remember that God transcends the limit of time before resolving that no predestination to evil exists. Humans are predestined to enter paradise or hell. He knows in advance which path –good or evil – each individual will choose and what will be his or her destination – Paradise or Hell. Job in his affliction said”....shall we expect good things from God, and not evil?” Deaths recorded in natural disasters like Hurricane Ike, Hurricane Katrina, the great 1906 San Francisco earthquake are not the responsibility of the deceased or of anyone. They took place that destiny may be fulfilled.

God created nature and its laws, He made moral laws and we cannot claim injustice if we face the consequence of our action – either by ignoring or upholding these laws. The government has constitution to guide its citizens knowing that some will uphold it while some will definitely default. God gave some moral laws in Exodus 20 to guide us so that ignorance of the law will be no excuse. We are responsible for our every action and all actions have been destined. In the supremacy of God, He does not only know that some will uphold or default these laws but knows each person – whether to uphold or default. He said “I know my sheep and my sheep know me, they listen to my voice”. He knows each person right from the womb by name.

In the bible, most events in the New Testament fulfill statements contained in the Old Testament. Judas Iscariot was foreordained to betray Jesus and subsequently commit suicide. See Matthew 27:9-10 and Zechariah 11:12-13. Also Isaiah in his book prophesied of a virgin giving birth to a son that will be called Immanuel in Isaiah 7:14 and it came to pass in Matthew 1:18 & 22. Mary conceiving as a virgin was not her free will, even though she might have heard about the prophecy never did she know she will be the blessed one. The line of events from the time the Israelites became slaves to Egypt to the time Egyptians drowned in the Red Sea and beyond were all destined, God knew it will all happen. It was His will – decree. There is an unseen that directs the affairs of men.

Fatalism a doctrine that abhors the teaching that destiny can be altered by man's free will and says that all events occur according to a fixed and inevitable decree that individual will neither controls nor affects. With fatalism all events are predetermined in advance for all time and human will is powerless to change them. A fated event takes place not according to natural laws but in accordance with some mysterious decree issued by some mysterious power; ages before.

Peter was emphatically told he will disown Jesus three good times before the rooster crows twice. In his quest to exercise free will he emphasized his willingness to die rather than to disown Jesus (Matthew 26:31 -35).

What happened after then, firstly everyone deserted Jesus and fled (Mark 14:49 – 50) and secondly Peter disowned him exactly as was preordained (Matthew 26: 69 – 75). Though Peter and others knew before hand that they will fall away, they could not avert it. This doctrine believes in a supernatural power that predetermines events without recourse to natural order thus giving little or no room for the efficacy of human will. At the points of denial, Peter took a decision (freewill) to deny Jesus. He left the courtyard where he first denied knowing Jesus to the gateway just to avert destiny – already proclaimed. Destiny was again fulfilled at the gateway. He remained at the gateway due to fear of more confrontations since his freewill (decision) was not to deny Jesus, again he denied the third time and the rooster crowed. It then he remembered what he was told. Wow! Even animals are destined – have destiny.

Our human will - freewill – is destiny fulfilling its consequences – destiny also. Fatalism lacks just in the abortion of human will. The supernatural power created everything – even nature itself – and gave them order. These orders are to fulfill destiny not to control it. Human will as an order fulfills destiny and cannot change it. When we think we have changed destiny by our decisions, we are only fulfilling destiny.

The resultant event of our decision – an event also – brings about Determinism. If Peter had stayed at the courtyard the second girl would not have seen him. Determinism is a doctrine that teaches that events are determined by the events that precede them. In its tenet that every event is an inevitable consequence of its immediate antecedents which may include human will. Determinism is consistent with the efficacy of human will unlike fatalism.

If Judas Iscariot did not betray Jesus, Jesus would not have been arrested and Peter would not have denied Jesus. It says that every event has an origin – preceding event.

For instance, you insulted me at the course of our misunderstanding and I got annoyed and I slapped you. These events are successive and are determined by the preceding events. A supernatural power had destined that I will slap you in annoyance when you insult me at the course of our misunderstanding at that particular moment.

I was driving one day, the rear shaft of my car pulled out with the tyre. There was no tumble, no casualty just a scratch on the road. People gathered, some thanking God for wonders and mercy, others congratulating me for carefully stopping the car, yet some others exclaimed “you are destined to live”. Yes all are right, thank for writing the “script”, congrats for using your intellect to fulfill what is “scripted” and your time is not yet up according to the “script”.

Everybody will not taste death before the judgement day, when we will account for all our deeds as scripted for us (Luke 9:27). Somebody or something must be held responsible for anything that happens, the unseen supreme hand made it so probably for a balance.

As we were gathered, each person expressing him or herself according to individual belief, an on-coming vehicle on high speed lost control from the driver and hit someone dead at the spot. The chorus changed to “God why”, “it’s a pity”, “what were you driving” and so on.

If the deceased had continued his journey without stopping at the scene, his decision (freewill) might prolong his life span. But because it has been scripted that, that particular car would kill him while standing at the scene of my car accident on that road at that particular time, his decision to stop fulfilled destiny.

Events do not solely depend on their antecedents whether immediate or not but solely on the content of the script – God’s will.

Our life or existence is only but a script written by a supernatural being with supernatural power, ours is to live it according to our roles in the scenes. We are all characters in a movie – life – playing our respective roles on the stage – earth.

There is time for everything, a purpose for everything under heaven so says Holy bible, a season for every activity under heaven. We only ascribe purpose and fulfilment to positivity and unfairly leaving negativity behind. If a man who dies as a pastor is said to have fulfilled his purpose, what we say of a man who died a robber? A time to gather and time to loose, these must be lost to someone.

If one decides to live a reckless, lackadaisical or nonchalant life, may be because all has been destined. Fine and good, it means one’s script says he will live like that. Same is true if you live a focused, determined or purposeful life. Whatever role we play on earth has been destined – scripted.

The Hindus believes that as God’s “force of gravity” shapes cosmic order, karma shapes experiential order. Karma literally meaning “deed or act” broadly describes the principle of cause and effect. Simply stated, karma is the law of action and reaction which governs consciousness. Similar to determinism, reaction is dependent on its antecedent – action. Karma teaches that our individual destiny depends on our free will – as Thompson Adewale stated. A Hindu believes he creates his destiny by his actions. Scientifically Sir Isaac Newton stated that for every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction. Truly we bear the consequences of our actions. Give and it will be given to you.....for with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. Luke 6:38.

Muslims believes that humans exercise free will, but that our destiny is also known by Allah (God). According to Islam, human beings are not completely the masters of their fates nor are they puppets subject to the hazards of destiny. The belief in

divine decree or destiny – qadar in Arabic – means a measure or latent possibilities with which Allah (God) created human beings and all things of nature. When Allah (God) created each thing, He determined when it would come into existence and when it would cease to exist; its qualities and nature. And everything in the universe – the seen and unseen – is completely subject to the overriding power of Allah (God). Nothing can happen outside His will. Allah gave humans limited power and great freedom, including freedom of choice. Destiny as conceived by Islam does not take away freedom of choice and action. It stressed that only sincere prayer can change the way events unfold and that true worship and submission to Allah (God) can raise a believer above the normal ways of nature. Islam believes we cannot know our future, and to a large extent cannot control it.

Now if we cannot know the future, how can we assert that an event was changed before unfolding?

“Whatever may happen to you was prepared for from all eternity; and the implication of causes was from eternity spinning the thread of your being” – Marcus Aurelius (121 – 180). In one of his writings Henry Miller said “Nothing is determined in advance, the future is absolutely uncertain, the past is non-existent”.

The true consolation statement is born out of inadequate knowledge of the future.

CHAPTER THREE

OMNISCIENCE

As a scientist, intellect will tell me that a litmus paper will turn red in an acid solution and blue in an alkaline solution and will remain same in water. Theories and laws have been propounded as a result of man's discoveries. Then God said, "Let us make human beings in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." Gen 1:26. Indeed man is given to rule and dominate over all creatures. He makes decisions within the limits of what he can control based on his understanding of the way the world works. He postulates events with limited foresight of the future.

In their 2001 – October issue, Scientific American published an article by Mark Fischetti titled "Drowning New Orleans", spoke about a major hurricane that could swamp New Orleans under 20 feet of water, killing thousands. So many predictions of such were made on that prior the disaster. How many of them gave the exact time of the disaster, exact extent of damage it will cause and exact psychological effect on each individual survivor resident in the affect areas? None! We can predict limitedly due to our knowledge of natural order. He who knows the past, the present and future controls everything. It was scripted the Hurricane Katrina disaster will be experienced all around New Orleans in August 25 through August 30 2005. God knew about it before hand.

It is pretty obvious that there is an unseen hand that rules the world. Man's quest for knowledge has unravelled that there is a sequence in everything. We only see what our eyes wants us to see – God is our eyes, His foolishness is wiser than our wisdom. Most times God reveals a bit of the future to us either by vision, dream, intellect e.t.c depending on our different gifts.

We can get to know about the future according to God's purpose. As Joseph's dream that he will rule over his brothers was narrated, he was sold and proclaimed dead by his brothers. They did this just because they felt insulted by little Joseph's guts and for the prophesy not to see the light. What happened? He went in as a slave and came out as a governor when his brothers came to buy food and bowed down before him. They fulfilled destiny instead of averting it by selling Joseph. Gen 37:5, 28; 41:41; 42:6-10.

The issue remains that Joseph did not know in his vaticination how, when and where it will come to pass. Only a limited fore-knowledge was granted him. You have a fore-knowledge that will hurt if you choose to punch your fist on a brick wall. This is purely intellectual and real – laws of nature. Can you forecast the exact intensity of harm it will cause? No. Thoughtfully, we can forecast what could have happened if we did otherwise in an event but cannot do otherwise after event. Our predictions are always facilitated by our intellect which is geared on the domineering power of man given by God. In one of my poems – *The future* – you can only talk about morrow, no one knows tomorrow. I talked about little foreknowledge of what could become of tomorrow as a result of efforts put in today and no adequate knowledge of exactly what tomorrow brings. Logically, there is no "to" in "morrow", we are given to know "morrow" no "to" inclusive.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE ARCHITECT

The exercise of freewill is an autonomy given to man by God. That we exist now is a sum total of our past lives – Hinduism. This implies that our present is the consequence of our past, and the future will be that of the present. As you make your bed, so will you lie on it – to a large extent is true but not always true.

A man wakes up in the morning, prays to his God and sets out for the day's activity. Suddenly on his way thunder strikes and lightning chars him. Another was hit by a car while sitting in his shop, yet another continues failing despite every possible human effort put. Job lost everything in a twinkling of an eye despite his upright and righteous life. What past hunts them?

Is man actually the architect of his destiny?

Architects create plans to be used in making something and engineers build according to plan – logically. Man makes his plans and directs the footsteps according to His plan for him. Man's plan is a function of God's plan for him. There is a plan and a PLAN – God's plan. No wonder Solomon in Ecclesiastics said "there is time for everything and a purpose for everything under heaven... I know that everything God does will endure forever, nothing can be added to it and nothing taken from it". Ecclesiastics 3:1, 14.

Everything has a purpose for being created – living and non living. Earth, the fair home was placed in the center of the universe wherein all things were ordained for his sole behoof; the sun to give him light and warmth, the stars in their course preside over his strangely checkered destinies, the wind to blow, the flood to rise or fiend of pestilence to stalk abroad over the land and so on – all for the blessing or warning or chiding of the chief among God's creation; Man.

When success is a set goal to be achieved, man beliefs destiny is on the way – he has drawn a plan. In the realm of man’s belief, destiny is evident only in success. In times of trials, he will say “when will I fulfill my destiny” or “will I fulfill my destiny on earth time or will I need to back again” or “this is not my destiny”.

In times of flourish, destiny is said to be fulfilled and he who suffers till death is said to have not fulfilled his destiny. Does this mean that some will fulfill their destiny while others will not? No! Everyone existing is fulfilling destiny at every moment of existence.

Job in the Holy bible at one time was a wealthy man – said to have fulfilled his destiny. Later adversaries came upon him; he lost everything he owned even his offsprings. In the realm men, Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar and people around him thought karma has caught up with him. Even his wife nagged him to curse God and die. Man sees events within the limits of his understanding. Imagine what became of Job during his adversaries.

Never did men of that time know that God knew Job’s fate beforehand. It was Job’s plan to work and live an upright life with the hope of prospering and it was God’s PLAN to let satan inflict him with adversaries – sickness, death e.t.c.

That destiny cannot be changed is as certain as the day follows the night – natural law. In a game, contenders both struggle to win but he who is destined to lose will do so. You are only destined to lose or win when you do so. The race is not of the swiftest or of him who wills but of God that shows mercy. This does not mean one should fold his arms and for manna to fall from heaven for every event – including our actions and inactions are fore-ordained – PLANNED.

Jesus in the gospel according to Saint Matthew taught his disciples to pray:

“Our Father which art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come,

thy will be done on earth as
it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread
and forgive us our sins as we forgive
those who sin against us.
And lead not into temptation but
deliver us from evil”.

Here Jesus acknowledged the fact that God’s will supercedes every other will. His will be done on earth as it is in heaven, not ours. When we pray, we ask that our wish may come to pass probably to change the present situation. When this happens we say our will has been done or that prayer has changed things but if otherwise we say let His will be done. Does prayer really change things? Truly it does change things that are evident or things expected to be evident not things yet to be evident. Most people believe that when God set certain rules in His decree as to when and how things unfold, even these things can be changed through prayers. Since we do not know His decree for our respective or collective existence we cannot ascertain that we have changed our future through prayers. Assuming I prayed today that I regain my health and tomorrow I get strong to my feet, would I not say my prayer has helped change my tomorrow’s situation or my expectation that I will still be ill tomorrow if I did not pray. It is also possible that I would stand strong on my feet tomorrow if I did not pray. We can only claim to have changed things we are certain about. What are we certain about? Possibilities!! Yes we are certain about possibilities. Our expectation is our belief and our belief is the feeling of certainty.

That prayer can and do result in “personal miracles”- events or experiences that we consider almost impossible and certainly highly improbable is all about belief. The

leper in the bible believed that by touching Jesus' garment he will be healed and it worked for him because it was God's will. Jesus despite he knew His purpose on earth prayed "...if it is your will take this cup away from me". God's will prevail. "What you bind on earth is bound in heaven", yours is the free will to bind with belief but final say is in heaven above – where God is believed to be enthroned. Some have bound, prayed and done everything humanly possible with faith for their belief to happen yet nothing has happened. His will does the "*architectural*" work while man's will – belief and actions does the "*engineering*" work. His time is the best.

Ultimately, the importance destiny plays in anyone's life depends on the individual's personal belief. It is important to know we cannot know nor change the future. We should not worry about what God has written for us since we can never know it but most importantly know that our duty is to strive for the best in this world.

Inspirationally, it is said that you create your world with your word – half truth. Most times we hear these "keep saying it, don't stop saying it". Had the leper just said to himself "if I touch his garment I will get healed" without believing and acting on it, he might have had fulfillment if healed. Half truths are more illusive than lies. Spending hours saying "I will be a musician" will not and cannot make one a musician but by singing and playing you can become one. Be doers of the word not hearers and/or speakers only deceiving yourselves. The satisfaction you derive from the outcome of your belief could create your world.

God knows everything, He knew us right from our mother's womb. He knows our path and footsteps. We can only be certain of what we want from the future and not the future itself. He alone knows what lies ahead. As He created nature and its laws, He made moral laws to guide man to achieve His purpose for him.

