

Questions and Answers from Joel (7/1/17)

Q: Does God have a plan for each person before he is born or is a person the maker of his own destiny?

A: There are two answers to that question. The person who is a selfhood apart from God may be a maker of his own destiny. ... A human being can decide on a career and force it through, although he may end up broken by it. It is possible for a person who is a salesman to desire to be a big money-making salesman, and if he has enough lack of scruples—if you can word it that way—he can push that through. ...

If you think of yourself as a human being, and decide that “I” will do this and “I” will do that, you may be able to accomplish it. Sometimes it can be done, and sometimes after it is done, you will be very sorry for it, because it can have a disastrous end. Think of Napoleon at Alba. Think of Caesar—it was for his ambition that he was slain. There are many cases where people achieve their human goal. It can be done with drive; it can be done with effort; it can be done with singleness of purpose.

So from that standpoint—as a human being—I would say that given enough of that drive, a person could be the maker of their own destiny. But that definitely is not the truth of being. That definitely is not the *spiritual* truth of being. The truth of being is this: God manifests Itself **as** individual being. And as such, God has a purpose for Itself and for all of Its individualized forms of expression. You may say that God has one purpose for Itself as an orchid, and an entirely different purpose for Itself as a rose. God has one purpose for Itself as an artist, and an entirely different purpose for Itself as a musician.

If you have ever met a child who was a painter at six or eight or ten years of age, or a musician, or an artist of any sort, you certainly know that that child is not the creator of its own destiny. God was working Its purpose out as the gift of that child, and that child had no possible way of resisting. The child probably could have been nothing other than an artist or a musician—and probably one of the best—because whatever it was that God was doing **as** that Soul had to come to fruition.

And so it is with our great artists, sculptors, designers, writers, and composers. You couldn't possibly say that these people worked out their destiny. Now I mean the serious ones—those who have given true literature, true poetry, and true art to the world. You can't say they were working out their own destiny, because they had no control over their gift. It was a gift that they found within their own being, and had they desired to let it lay, they couldn't have done it. There was something that went with that gift that forced them to give it outlet and expression.

Oh, no. You are not the maker of your own destiny *when you are working from the standpoint of your spiritual identity*. Then you have dropped your personal sense of desire or ambition and you have let God have Its way with you. Then it's not you working out your destiny. It is God working out **Its** destiny **as** you.

Certainly, this man in San Francisco who was a criminal—and such a good one that at twenty-six years of age, he had four terms to serve and the last one was twenty years—was working out his destiny all right. But once he relaxed and let go and realized the depth of what he had brought himself to, and once he surrendered himself and shrieked out, “Oh, God!” God was given the opportunity to work out God's destiny **as** his being. From that day to this, he has been

one of the greatest missionaries and one of the greatest reformers of prison work. He has been a metaphysician of sorts because he has had his contact with God, and that has enabled God to work out God's own destiny **as** this man's soul.

So yes, if you look at yourself as a human being and want to determine what you would like to do, and if you are willing to pay the price in study, work, and energy, you can work out your own destiny. But from our standpoint, we see God as the mind, the soul, the spirit, the all, of every individual. Therefore, we must acknowledge that God, the creative Principle and the divine Intelligence, must include an intelligent and loving plan for Itself in all of its infinite form and variety.

Anyone then, who relaxes sufficiently and humbly and opens themselves to this inflow of God can say, "No, I'm not working out my destiny. God is working out **Its** destiny **as** me." Or if we like, we can say, "God is working out my destiny for me." But to me, that sounds as if there is a sense of separation, so I like better, "God is working out **Its** own plan **as** my individual being."

When we are born—as we seem to be in this human activity—and our parents decide for us that we are to be business men or women, and we become that, in that sense then, either we or our parents are working out our destiny. But if we come to some place or other where a drive, a sense, a desire for God comes, and we make the contact, from then on all that business is wiped away, and you find yourself out in a metaphysical or spiritual activity. And then you can say that God has taken over, and God is now fulfilling Its function.

That is why I have said that when we are about our ordinary human pursuits, we are not fulfilling God's plan. Those are the human activities that have come to us because of our sense of separation. When we come to that place of opening ourselves and receiving that divine impulse, our ways are led into actual expression of spiritual activity in the arts, in literature, in spiritual work, or in anything that is the direct portrayal of God activity.

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