

Doctrine of Predestination

1. Theology is not philosophy. We do not discover truth nor reconcile it with other truths. Rather we submit to Divine revelation and honor it.
 - *1 Corinthians 2:11 For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.*
2. The final cause of all God's purposes is His own glory.
 - *Revelation 4:11 Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.*
3. God has a Plan. It is one, all comprehending Plan.
4. All parts, causes and conditions constitute this one Plan even though there is variety and complexity within the Plan much like there is complexity and unity in a building, a car, or a watch.
5. A distinction can be made between the secret decree of God and His revealed will. The revealed will of God is always spoken of as having been in secret.
 - *Ephesians 3:11 According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord:*
 - *Ephesians 3:9 And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ:*
 - *Ephesians 1:9 Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself:*
 - Proposition. God has had from eternity an unchangeable Plan with reference to His creation.
 - Proposition. The Plan of God comprehends and determines all things and all events. The evidence is both general (Eph. 1:11) and specific (Matt. 10:29,30). The Plan of God anticipates and includes the free actions of men (Prov. 21:1) either for good (Eph. 2:10) or for evil (Acts 2:23).
 - Note. When the brothers of Joseph sold him into slavery God permitted the wicked deed to be done but He limited the evil to slavery and not killing. Then God determined good to be the outcome of the evil (Gen. 50:20).
 - Proposition. The Plan of God is not conditional in part nor in whole. It is fixed, eternal, and unchangeable according to God's own nature (James 1:17; Isa. 14:24; 46:9, 10).

- Caution. Any specific event is conditioned on other events. Both logic and observation demonstrate this. For example, if a man does not sow seeds he will not harvest a crop. If a man does not believe in Jesus Christ he will be damned. All this is viewed from the human perspective.

However, the Bible reveals that from a Divine perspective, the all comprehensive plan of God embraces and determines the causes and the conditions as well as the event suspended upon them. The Plan of God does not alter anything that has been decreed but determines the nature of events and their mutual relationships.

The Sovereign Plan of God Illustrated

The Salvation of Jacob
Genesis 27:41ff

IMMEDIATE CAUSE

Fear of Esau
Flees to Uncle

ULTIMATE CAUSE

Electing Love

Safety in the Shipwreck
Acts 27:24-31

ULTIMATE CAUSE

God's Grace

IMMEDIATE CAUSE

Storm
Dream
Message Spoken

- Proposition. The decrees of God are free. By this we mean that God was under no necessity to do something nor is He now under necessity. God was free to create or not to create. God was free to create such a world as now is or to create an entirely different world. Again, God's decrees are free in that they are sovereign. Nothing is conditional to God for if any single thing were conditional then the decrees of God would be neither eternal nor immutable.

- Proposition. The decrees of God are certainly efficacious, they render certain the occurrence of what He decrees. Whatever God foreordains must certainly come to pass.

Observe. No man fails to execute what he purposes unless he lacks the wisdom, power, or certainty to bring it about (Cp. Isa. 14:27).

- Proposition. The decrees of God relate to all events. This is proved from the unity of purpose. What General will not plan a battle, including all the movements of every corps, division, and brigade in his army, and if he could, the act of every soldier. What a General would do, God can do.

Observe. To say that God "permits" certain things because He foresees something is not to say anything for nothing can occur that was not foreseen and if foreseen it must have been intended.

- Proposition. Free acts are foreordained. Sinful free acts are foreordained as per Acts 2:23; Luke 22:22. And holy acts are foreordained (Rev. 17:17).

6. There are Several objections to the Doctrine of the Divine Decrees

- Argument. Fore-ordination is inconsistent with free agency.

Response. Terms need to be defined. By the decrees of God we are to understand that the purpose of God has rendered certain the occurrence of all future events. By a free act we are to understand that there is an act made by a rational self-determining, intelligent person. Now, if an act of a person is from its very nature contingent or uncertain to God, then it is clear that foreordination is inconsistent with free agency.

For example, if I marry my wife, I do not marry someone else. If it cannot be foreknown then it cannot be foreordained. If it cannot be foreordained then God cannot be all knowing. What is foreknown must be as certain as what is foreordained.

If foreknowledge is inconsistent with liberty so is foreordination and vice versa. This is sometimes honestly admitted. One scholar named Socinus argued that the knowledge of God embraces all that is knowable. Future free actions being uncertain are not the objects of knowledge.

If this were true then future acts could not be predicted. The Bible is filled with such predictions. Someone else has suggested that God be limited by His own will. However, God cannot stop being God.

On a positive side an event may be free and yet be certain. For example. Do you not know how you will respond if your child or loved one came to you in pain? Is it not certain that you will comfort that person? And yet, are you not conscious that your free agency is not impaired?

Free acts have been predicted in the Bible and therefore their occurrences was certain.

Nothing was more certain than that our Lord would continue holy, harmless, and undefiled yet His acts were all free.

It is certain that Christians will repent, believe, and persevere in holiness and yet our actions are free. We say again, an event may be certain and yet be free.

- Argument. Foreordination of sin is inconsistent with holiness.

Response. This is not true since sin and misery actually exists. It is thought that an agent is responsible for all the necessary or certain consequences of his acts. That principle is untenable. For example. A righteous judge in pronouncing sentence on a criminal may be sure that he will cause wicked and bitter feelings in the criminal's mind or in the hearts of his friends and yet the judge will be guiltless.

- Argument. The Doctrine of the Divine Decrees destroys all motives to exertion.

Response. This is not true for the decrees includes the means as well as the command and promises of God. The stronger the hope for success, the greater is the motive to exertion.