

Biblical Predestination vs. Determinism

by Dean Harvey

Text: Eph. 1:1-10

Introduction:

This morning I compared three systems of theology. The crux of each is how it deals with predestination and foreknowledge, and what are the resultant implications for the rest of that particular system of theology.

The terms "predestination" and "foreknowledge" are Biblical terms. In order to be an honest Christian, is it necessary to accept these terms with their Calvinistic content, or is there another possible explanation which will do honor to the inerrant Word of God, and exalt the character of God?

I believe that the Calvinistic understanding of predestination, if true, requires God to be the author of sin, requires that He be arbitrary, and requires that He be unjust.

I believe that the Arminian understanding of foreknowledge, if true, requires that God "connive" at sin, and that in the end it is just as fatalistic as is predestination.

Predestination is a Biblical term, and it is a fact that God predestines some events. However, the popular idea is that God predestines the future of every person, and He does this from eternity past before any person was even born. If this idea is true, it might make you feel good if you were one of those who was predestined to be saved and to go to heaven. However, if you were one of those who was predestined to be lost and go to hell, how would that make you feel about God?

The problem with the popular understanding of predestination is that it makes God seem arbitrary, and if God has really foreordained something, it doesn't make any difference what any of us do, it cannot be changed. God has already decided who He wants in heaven and in hell, and we can't do anything about it. THIS IS FATALISM OR DETERMINISM APPLIED TO RELIGION.

I believe that there are multitudes of intelligent people who have reservations about the God of Christianity because of what is commonly understood as "predestination." That idea is summarized in my first two propositions in this thesis.

PROPOSITION 1

If God is all powerful, and if, millions of years ago, or at least some time in the past, He has predestined Dean Harvey to go to hell, is there anything Dean Harvey can do to keep from going to hell? What is Dean Harvey's attitude toward God likely to be when he finds out, or if this is true? GOD ISN'T FAIR, AND I DIDN'T HAVE A CHANCE.

PROPOSITION 2

If God is all powerful, and if, millions of years ago, or at least some time in the past, He has predestined Dean Harvey to go to heaven, is there anything Dean Harvey can do to keep from going to heaven? What will be the attitude of those who are not going to heaven toward Dean Harvey's God? GOD ISN'T FAIR, AND I DIDN'T HAVE A CHANCE.

The Greek word *prooridzo* is the word which is translated predestine, foreordain, or decree (all synonyms), depending on which translation of the Bible you are using. This word is used six times in the New Testament.

I. Acts 4:28...to do whatever thy hand and thy plan had predestined (*proorisen*-3rd sing., aor. 1, ind.) to take place.

A. The event which was predestined was the atonement of Christ. (THIS EVENT WAS TO MAKE POSSIBLE THE SALVATION OF ALL MEN.)

II. Romans 8:29 For whom He foreknew (*proegno*-3rd sing., aor. 1, ind.), he also predestined (*proorisen*-3rd sing., aor. 1, ind.) to be conformed to the image of his Son...

A. That which was predestined was that those God had known before should be like His Son.

1. The same word, when used of God, is translated differently than it is used in reference to men. If we postulate that it can be used the same way when it is used of God, then that would remove the Arminian argument that foreknowledge precedes predestination.

2. If used of God in the same way it is used of men by Paul and Peter, it would simply refer those whom God knew before the present time, such as Enoch, Noah, Moses, Elijah, David, etc. They were friends of God, He was involved in an intimate, personal relationship with them. As a result of that, He predestined them to be conformed to the image of His Son, and then He called, justified, and glorified them.

III. Romans 8:30...and those whom he predestined (*proorisen*-3rd sing., aor. 1, ind.) he also called...justified...glorified.

A. Predestination led to calling, justification, and glorification.

IV. I Cor. 2:7...but we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed (proorisen-3rd sing., aor. 1, ind.) before the ages for our (What does this our mean?) glorification.

A. Notice that the secret wisdom was what God had predestined "before the ages." (CONTEXT IS I COR. 1 (THE KIND OF PEOPLE GOD WANTS IN HIS KINGDOM, AND I COR. 2, THAT WHICH IS PREPARED FOR HIS PEOPLE.)

V. Eph. 1:5...He destined (proorisas-nom. sing., masc. part. aor. 1, act.) us in love to be his sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of His will...

A. The predestination is for "us" to be His sons. (WHAT A WONDERFUL PREDESTINATION. Would you like to be the son of a rich, powerful, loving, and generous man? How much more God!)

B. Normally the "us" (7), "we" (3), "our" (2), "you (ye)" (2), and "sons" (1) (The translated pronouns are taken from the NASV) in Eph. 1:1-14 is taken to mean that God had predestined all of us who are now Christians by name, i. e., that He had us in mind as specific individuals from "before the foundation of the world." The words fit just as well from the viewpoint of a general predestination, and fit much better from the viewpoint of a "real" universal call to salvation.

VI. Eph. 1:11...we who first hoped in Christ have been destined (prooristhentes-nom. pl. masc. part. aor. 1, pass.) and appointed to live for the praise of his glory.

A. That which is predestined is that "we" should live for the praise of his glory.

SUMMARY:

PROPOSITION 3

God has not predestined any individual(s) to be saved for eternity in heaven.

PROPOSITION 4

God has not predestined any individual(s) to be lost for eternity in hell.

PROPOSITION 5

It is God's plan of salvation which has been predestined from "before the ages" (I Cor. 2:7). As a part of that plan of salvation God has predestined that:

1. Christ would be crucified. (Acts 4:28)

2. Those who (whosoever) voluntarily participate in His plan of salvation would be conformed to the image of His Son (Jesus), and would be called, justified, and glorified. (Rom. 8:29-30)

3. Those who (whosoever) voluntarily participate in His plan of salvation will be His sons. (Eph. 1:5)

4. Those who (whosoever) voluntarily participate in His plan of salvation will live for the praise of His glory. (Eph. 1:11)

CONCLUSION: It is not the salvation, or condemnation, of individual(s) which was predestined, but it was the plan and the events which would bring the plan to pass. Individual conformity to the conditions of the plan was, and is, left up to the individual(s) themselves. Individual men and women are truly free.

PROPOSITION 6

If anyone (whosoever) repents of his sins, believes on the Lord Jesus Christ, and continues in the obedience of faith, he receives the predestined blessings according to the plan.

PROPOSITION 7

If anyone (whosoever) refuses to repent, believe, and continue, he receives the predestined curses according to the plan.

In relationship to the concept of predestination, several words are used to basically describe the same idea.

Decree (n) 2; b: a foreordaining will; (a decision)

Decree (vb.) 1: to command or enjoin by decree; 2: to determine or order judicially; ordain

Foreordain (vt)-to dispose or appoint in advance, predestine.

Predestinate (adj)-destined, fated, or determined beforehand (n) to foreordain to an earthly or eternal lot or destiny by divine decree.

Predestination (n)-1: the act of predestinating; the state of being predestinated 2: the doctrine that God in consequence of his foreknowledge of all events infallibly guides those who are destined for salvation.

Predestinator (n)-one that predestinates.

Predestine (vt)-to destine, decree, determine, appoint, or settle beforehand.

Predetermination (n)-1; The act of predetermining; the state of being predetermined: as a: the ordaining of events beforehand b: a fixing or settling in advance; 2: a purpose formed beforehand.

Predetermine (vt)-1: a: foreordain, predestine b: to determine beforehand 2: to impose a direction or tendency on beforehand.

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