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## **Predestination**

**Radically Biblical, Apostolic, Christianity**



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## Predestination

This is a subject which is very little understood, even by those Christians who profess to embrace it in their creed. This is due, in part, to the nature of the subject, to its profundity, and to the infinite range of its complications with other important truths. But, it is also, in large measure, due to inattention and to the general prevalence of a natural, though, an unfounded and ignorant prejudice. This prejudice has become, in many quarters, an epidemic, irresistible to persons of more zeal, than judgment. Now, I wish to urge a plea in favor of an earnest, frank, patient study of the subject. Vague prejudice unsupported by definite knowledge, has no value. It is unquestionable that the Scriptures do teach some doctrine of predestination, and a very strict doctrine of unconditional election has been held by the greatest and most thoroughly Biblical theologians, and by whole denominations of Christians, most conspicuous for their evangelical character and fruitfulness. It will not do for any of us to dismiss such a subject with supercilious impatience. We should, at the very least, do our best to secure a clear conception of the doctrine, and of its relation to other doctrines, before we make ourselves sure, that it is not true.

I. In the first place, it should be clearly understood, that this great principle of divine predestination is held in two entirely different connections and interests. It has, by a great many, been discussed simply as a question of transcendental theology, as concerning the acts of God enacted in eternity in a sphere above and behind the external phenomena, which are obvious to our senses. If there be a God, He necessarily exists, in eternity, while the creation exists in the successions and limitations of time. The universe, as a whole, and all the parts of it, originate in Him and depend upon Him, and therefore, are determined by Him. According to the precise language of the Westminster Shorter Catechism, Question 7, "The decrees of God are, His eternal purpose, according to the counsel of His will, whereby, for His own glory, He hath foreordained whatsoever comes to pass." This sweeps the whole universe, and is a proposition of the highest and most general speculative importance. This position is unquestionably, in this form, true and logically involved, in all Scriptural views of the

doctrine of grace, in all its elements. It is therefore, rightly embraced in our Confession of Faith, and the present writer, with all his heart, believes it to be true. It is in this Spirit and form, this speculative point of view, that Zwingli discusses this subject, in his *De Providentia*. And it is this aspect of the question, which is habitually considered by the general Christian public in their hostile criticisms of this doctrine. Now, I am perfectly free to confess, that however true this view of the general principle of predestination is, and however much it is logically implicated in the essentials of the Christian doctrines of grace, nevertheless, this transcendental way of conceiving of the matter, is more speculative than practical. Although I heartily accord with the view in my own mind, I feel no disposition to insist upon the assent of any Christian brother, as a matter of loyalty to the Christian faith. No element of the Creed is essential, unless it practically determines the attitude of the soul, in its relations to God, through Christ. And only those aspects and modes of conceiving Christian truth, should be insisted upon and imposed upon others, as obligatory, which do directly determine this Godward attitude of our souls, or, in other words, which directly enter into and give form, to our religious experience.

On the other hand, Calvin presents his characteristic doctrine of eternal election, in living connection, with the great practical experimental questions of personal salvation and of divine grace. If we are sinners, it is evident that the practically essential thing in religious experience, is to appreciate truly our guilt, unworthiness, and helplessness before God, and God's free grace, toward us to its full extent. If God is infinitely gracious and just, if at measureless expense, He redeemed us at the cost of the pain, shame, and death of His Son, it follows that any failure in our appreciation of our own unworthiness and helplessness, or of God's gracious activity in our salvation, would be absolutely insufferable. To claim more for ourselves or to ascribe less to God, than the facts of the case justify, would be the greatest of all sins, and would be the very thing to make salvation impossible. The sense of our own guilt, pollution, and impotence, and of the absolute unconditioned freeness of the grace, which saves us, is involved in every case of genuine religious experience.

The expiatory work of Christ, which is sufficient for, adapted to, and freely offered to all men, being presupposed, the question of questions is: How --- by what agencies and on what conditions --- is it effectually applied to any individual? The Scriptures make it plain, that the condition of its effectual application, is an act of faith, involving real Spiritual repentance and the turning from sin and the acceptance and self-appropriation of Christ and of His redemption, as the only remedy. But what will prompt a sinner, in love with his sin, Spiritually blind and callous, thus, to repent and accept Christ as the cure of the sin he loves? The first movement cannot begin with man. The sinner of himself cannot really desire deliverance from sin; of himself, he cannot appreciate the attractive beauty, loveliness, or saving power of Christ. The dead man cannot spontaneously originate his own quickening, nor the creature his own creating, nor the infant his own begetting. Whatever man may do after regeneration, the first quickening of the dead must originate in the first instance, with God. All Christians feel this, as the most intimate conviction of their souls. Yet, it involves necessarily this very doctrine of eternal predestination or election. If God begins the work, if our believing follows His quickening, then it is God, not man, who makes the difference between the quickened and the unquickened. If we believe, it is because we have been first quickened. If any man does not believe, it is because he is, yet dead, in his natural sin. God's eternal choice, therefore, cannot depend upon foreseen faith, but, on the contrary, faith must depend upon God's eternal choice.

As between the man who believes in Christ and the man who finally rejects Him, the source of the difference, is put by the Pelagian entirely in the inalienable, unassisted power of the human will. All that can be said, in the case, is that the one man has accepted Christ, because he chose to do so, and the other man has rejected Christ, because he chose to do so. Each has acted as he has done in the unfettered and unfetterable exercise of the human will. But, Pelagianism makes no room for original sin, nor for the necessity of divine grace. It is diametrically opposed to the Scriptures, to the religious experience, of all Christians, and it has been rejected as anti-Christian, by the unanimous consent of the whole historic Church.

The semi-Pelagian, admitting that man is morally sick, holds that every sinner must make the first movement Godward spontaneously in his own strength, after which, if his effort is sincere, however ineffectual, God will co-operate by His grace with him, and make his effort successful. The Arminian, on the other hand, admitting that all men, being dead in trespasses and sins, are absolutely incapable of spontaneously originating any good desire or effort, yet holds, that God gives the same sufficient grace, to all men; and He makes the difference between the believer and the unbeliever, to lie in the fact, that the former co-operates, and thus, renders the grace, in his case, effectual, and the other fails to co-operate with it, and thus, renders it, ineffectual. The Lutheran, who maintains that men are in such sense, dead in sin, that they are utterly unable to co-operate with grace before they have been themselves quickened to life by grace, yet, makes the difference between the believer and the unbeliever to consist in the fact, that while no man can co-operate with grace, previous to regeneration, every man is free to resist it. With the Lutheran, therefore, the believer is the non-resistant, the unbeliever is the resistant, subject of a common universal grace. The Calvinist, on the other hand, glorifies the free and sovereign grace of God, by attributing to it alone, all the efficiency in saving the believing sinner. It is God's grace which makes the believer all he is. He feels this; of this at least, he is absolutely sure. He is nothing more than a poor wandering sheep. The Good Shepherd has sought him out, found him, and carried him back on His breast. In himself, and of himself, in his entire history, he is no better than his fellowmen, who are lost. It is only God's free grace, therefore, which has made the difference. The faith he has, cannot have been the precondition of God's choice, but God's choice must have been the precedent cause of his faith.

In this form of the doctrine, we did not first choose Him, but He first chose us. This truth enters into all genuine Christian experience. It is of the essence of the universal Christian sentiment. It finds its expression in the sacred hymns and in the prayers of our fellow-Christians, who call themselves Arminians, as it does in the prayers and hymns of those commonly styled Calvinists. All alike, wrestle in prayer, as if God's grace determined the decision. All alike cry, "Make them willing, O God, in the day of Thy power!" It is the common confession, of all alike, that it is God, who in all things,

works in us to do, by “working in us to will, of His good pleasure.” All alike, ascribe to Him, the prerogative of turning the hearts of men, even as rivers of water are turned. All Christians with one voice cry, “Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy Name give glory, for Thy mercy and for Thy truth’s sake.” In the theology of the heart, all Christians are Calvinists --- that is, all Christians ascribe all their salvation unto God. And this is the only form, in which, the doctrine of sovereign predestination should be insisted upon, as of vital religious interest

II. The real question remains. What does the Word of God say upon the subject? In all matters of controversy between Christians, the Scriptures constitute the single court of last resort. This is a historical principle. Today it remains as true as ever, no matter what crude theories of inspiration some parties may proclaim. The Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments have been, for eighteen centuries, are today, and always, will remain the only common authority of Christendom, acknowledged by all alike.

These Scriptures do certainly teach a divine election of persons and foreordination of events. This fact, all educated persons acknowledge. The only controversy among Christians relates to the range of the foreordination, whether it comprehends all events or is limited to certain classes; and to the subjects, the objects, and the conditions of the election, which the Scriptures teach.

I. All Christians, of course, admit that the eternal Creator of the world, in the very act of creation, intelligently comprehending the end from the beginning, really, immutably, and unconditionally determined all classes of events, subsequently brought about by the necessary sequences of natural forces and laws. As far as the universe is a machine, God, in bringing it into being, and in implanting its forces, and in ordaining its laws, necessarily determined all movements of the machine and its results from the beginning to the end. But, there has been a natural shrinking from attributing to the foreordination of God, all the free acts of men and angels, and especially, the sinful acts of men and devils.

Nevertheless, the Scriptures are very explicit upon these points. (1) The foreordination of God does include the free actions of men and angels, as it does all other classes of events, whatsoever. God works in man, freely and spontaneously *to will*, according to His good pleasure (Phil. ii. 13). Men and nations are the mere instruments, (the axe, saw, rod) in the hand of God, to do His will (Isa. x. 15). God definitely predicts the free actions of men, ages before the men themselves exist (Isa. xlv. 28; xlv. 1-4). All prophecy implies foreknowledge; and all foreknowledge on the part of a God, who has intelligently and of purpose, Created all things out of nothing, of course, implies the foreordination of all the foreseen results of that creation. If even one so limited in knowledge and power as you or I should place in the hands of a dependent, a horse that we certainly knew would run away on that road and in the hands of that man, beyond question, we would predetermine that runaway and all of its foreseen results.

(2) The Scriptures go even further, and declare that even the sinful acts of men are foreordained, by God. This does not mean that God regards the wicked acts with complacency, or that He will condone them, or that we are in any degree, excusable for acting them, much less, that God is their Author or cause, directly or indirectly. It means, simply, that these wicked actions were a clearly foreknown part of a system of things, which God freely chose, and the future existence of which He freely and righteously determined, for good and sufficient reasons, the evil never being ordained, as an end in itself, but always as a means to an infinitely greater and better end. Thus, in the history of Joseph (compare Gen. xxxvii. 28 with Gen. xlv. 7, 8; 1. 20), Joseph said to his treacherous brethren, who sold him into slavery, "So, now it was not you that sent me hither, but God;" "But, as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good." (Ps. xvii. 13, 14, and Isa. x. 5-1; 5.). The greatest crime ever committed in the universe was the crucifixion of the Son of God. To accomplish this, Gentiles and Jews, in vast numbers and of all classes, freely conspired. Yet, their wicked act was "determined beforehand to be done," by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God: "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain" (Acts ii. 23). "For of a truth against thy Holy child, Jesus, whom thou has anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatsoever

thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done” (Acts iv. 27, 28; xiii. 29; 1 Peter. ii. 8; Jude iv.; Rev. xvii. 17).

II. As to the doctrine of election, and of the confessedly various “elections,” which are asserted in Scripture, there have been very different opinions held among Christians. Those who lay emphasis upon what has been entitled the “theory of national election,” as eminently, the late Archbishop Sumner, maintain that the only election taught in Scripture, concerning human salvation, consists in the divine predestination of communities and nations to the knowledge of the true religion, and to the external privileges of the Gospel. This form of election is an unquestionable Biblical fact, and has been pre-eminently illustrated in the people of Israel, in the ancient world, and in the great English-speaking nations of modern times.

Those who, like Mr. Stanley Faber and Archbishop Whately, emphasize what they call, the “theory of ecclesiastical individualism,” hold that the only personal election taught in the Bible respects the election of individual men to membership in the external Church and the means of grace. This also is an unquestionable Scriptural fact, realized in the experience of all the members of the Christian community.

Both these types of election, both of nations and of individuals, to the external means of grace, are obviously sovereign and unconditioned. Both, men and nations, are born to these privileges, irrespective of any previous merits or actions of their own. And are to these forms of God’s sovereign election, there is no difference of opinion between Arminians and Calvinists or other Christians of whatever name.

But, students of the Scriptures see that they do moreover teach explicitly, that God does elect some individuals to eternal blessedness and to all the means thereof. Here, the precise point of difference between Arminians and Calvinists comes in. The old Arminian statement was, that God graciously elected the class of believers to everlasting life, and that if any individual man was included in the election, it was because he was included in the class of believers. The more modern Arminian

statement, is to the same effect; in other words, that God elected certain individuals to eternal life, on the ground of their faith, as foreseen by Him. But, the question necessarily arises, "Where did these individuals come by their faith?" If they got the faith of themselves, then their salvation is not entirely of grace and of God. If God gave them their faith, then it was in His purpose; and if it was embraced in His purpose, it could not have been the condition on which it was suspended. But, the Scriptures and Christian experience unite, in affirming that "faith is the gift of God" (Eph. ii. 8; Acts v. 31; 1 Cor. iv. 7). The designed effect of this eternal election is, "that we should be Holy, and without blame, before Him, in love" (Eph. i. 4; ii. 10; 2 Thess. ii. 13; 1 Pet. i. 2), and therefore, that Holy state, could not have been the foreseen condition of his choice. The very gist of the election, is that of the children, who "neither had done good or evil," "that the purpose of God, according to election, might stand, not of works, but of Him that calleth." God chose one and rejected the other. The very gist was, that "the potter hath power over the clay, of the same lump, to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor" (Rom. ix. 11-21). The order in which the Holy Spirit puts the matter, is very clear: "As many as were ordained to eternal life believed" (Acts xiii. 48). It was the personal foreordination to eternal life, which determined the believing, and not the foreseen believing, which conditioned the foreordination.

The true comprehensive statement of the Scriptural teaching, as to election, includes all those just stated. The purpose of God is sovereign, absolute, and all-comprehensive, relating to all classes of events whatsoever. All nations and communities and individuals have been predestined precisely to all the relations and means of grace they experience, and to all the results thereof. But, besides this, the Scriptures explicitly teach an election (a) of individuals (b) to salvation, and to all the means and conditions thereof (c) founded, not upon the foreseen faith of the persons elected, but upon the infinitely wise and sovereign purpose of God alone (Eph. i. 5-11; 2 Tim. i. 9; John xv. 16-19; Matt. xi. 25, 26; Rom. ix. 10-18).

III. The difficulty, which all feel, in attempting to receive this unquestionable truth of revelation, and assimilate it to the whole mass of our own thinking, respects (1) the

freedom and responsibility of man, and (2) the Holiness of God. How can man be free, if from eternity, all his actions have been certainly determined? And, if God, by His decree, makes the future occurrence of each sin absolutely certain, how can He be Holy? These combinations, doubtless present, puzzles of considerable difficulty to our minds in their present state of enlightenment. But, these do not, in any degree, differ from a large class of problems, which the imperfection and narrowness of our knowledge, prevent us from solving. God's decree, it is obvious, is not an immediate efficient cause, which interferes with natural causes or which brings anything into being. It is simply, an immanent plan or purpose in the divine mind, which determines the certain occurrence of the events to which it relates. The same, precisely is true, with respect to the divine foreknowledge. All Christians believe, that God eternally foreknows whatsoever shall be, in the future. If His knowledge is real knowledge, it is certain; and if it is certain as knowledge, the events to which it relates, must be certainly future. If the difficulty of reconciling certainty with the freedom of man or with the Holiness of God, does not move us to abandon His foreknowledge, it cannot be a rational motive for our denying the truth of His universal predestination. A God without foreknowledge, would be only, a blind force. Every argument which establishes theism on the evident teleology of the universe, by equal cogency, establishes the divine foreknowledge. Without the foreknowledge of God, there would be no intelligent Creation, no wise moral government, no ground for religious trust, no confidence for the future, no basis for either, the prophecies or the promises of God. The foreknowledge admitted, there is no logical reason for excepting to His foreordination.

IV. As to the bearing of this doctrine upon the freedom of man's will, it must be remembered, that uncertainty is never essential to liberty. The essence of liberty is, that the free act shall be self-originated and self-directed. The self-determination of an undeveloped child, is uncertain. It is swayed every moment, by external influences; and in just that proportion, the child's action is uncertain, and lacks the highest quality of moral freedom. But, the choices of the educated and thoroughly developed man, in his ripe maturity, are far more certain both, to himself and to others. He is not open to external influence or liable to internal whim or change; and exactly in that proportion,

does he rise to the highest level of moral freedom. He thoroughly understands himself and his permanent needs and wishes. His character is formed, and freedom is the genuine and adequate expression of character. God's purposes and self-decisions are the most certain, and at the same time, the most free, of any actions that are conceivable. A drifting boat at sea, swept hither and thither by the winds and waves, is an admirable type of action, utterly devoid of freedom and of certainty. It has no self-control, and therefore, its action is equally unfree and uncertain. But, a great steamship, at the same time, self-propelled and self-steered, is an admirable type, both of freedom and of certainty. Its action is predetermined, foreseen, and may confidently be relied upon, because it is free -- that is, in the intelligent will of its navigator, acting through its powerful machinery, it possesses in the highest degree, self-control and intelligent self-direction.

The eternal foreordination of God, which determines, at once, the certainty and the freedom of man's free actions, can in no way, interfere with man's freedom. The action is not free, if it is determined from without, but, it is free, if determined from within a rational will. Now, this is precisely what God's foreordination of man's free action effects. The decree, at the same time, determines that man shall be a free agent, shall possess a certain character, shall be surrounded by certain environment, shall be specifically solicited by certain external influences, shall be internally moved by certain spontaneous affections, shall deliberately canvass certain reasons, and shall freely make, a certain choice. The man, thus is, as far as a finite creature may be, entirely self-moved and self-determined, and therefore, he is free. The fact that his act is also certain is, as we have seen, and as Richard Watson, the great theologian of the Wesleyan Arminians, admits, no ground of presumption, that it, is not also absolutely free.

V. As to the consistency of God's foreordination of sin with His Holiness, we have nothing to say, except to admit the mystery, and to affirm that there is no possible escape, except in denying the fact, either of the existence of God, on the one hand, or of the existence of sin, on the other. If the cause which produced the universe did not

foresee the sin which the present system embraces, then that cause was a blind, unintelligent force, and not God. If He did foresee it, and notwithstanding, proceeded to bring that system, involving these sins, into existence, then He made their occurrence certain; He foreordained them. God did, with His eyes open, choose out of a myriad of other possible systems, this actual system involving sin. He nevertheless, is Holy. He hates, forbids, punishes, restrains, and overrules the sin, for good. In the light of the cross of Christ, on which God lays upon His Son, the penalty of human sin, in the light of the Great White Throne and of the Lamb, which irradiates the eternal city, the mystery of the divine permission of sin, loses its overwhelming force. We have no complete solution of the problem, and it is not to be expected, in our present stage of education. But, we do see the light underneath the curtain. We do possess pledges for the Immaculate Holiness of God, and for the future, moral perfection of His realm, and for the moral vindication of His reign, which suffice for the perfect assurance of our faith.

VI. Everything depends, in all departments of human thought, upon the point of view. Everyone knows that, when traversing the scenes of a great battle, what appears to be inextricable confusion to us, while we are passing along the outskirts and through the lower grounds, falls into complete order and appears as clear as light, when we overlook the whole field from the strategic centre from which the eye and mind of the field marshal beheld and controlled the contest. We all know that the heavens continued through all past ages, to be an insoluble riddle to all looking upon them, from the exterior and shifting standpoint of the earth. The movements of the sun and moon and of the wandering planets could be reduced to no intelligible plan. But, the moment that, in imagination, the great Copernicus transferred the point of view from the earth to the central sun, all the hosts of heaven fell into rank, and have ever since, been seen to march onward in a symmetrical order, absolutely divine. In the morning, if we look eastward over a vast landscape with the sun before us, we see all things obscurely on their shadowed side. But, if we look from the same point eastward in the evening, with the sun behind us, we see all the objects contained in the vast panorama, glorified on the sunlit side.

In like manner, must it be with all men, when looking over the vast reaches of Jehovah's plans or works from below. No matter how intellectual they may be personally, no matter how vast their knowledge otherwise, it is just a matter of course, that from their human, changing outlook, as they are themselves swept along in the current of events, the relations of all objects should be confused. And, especially must the relation of the several parts, to God, be misconceived, seen as they are, on their shadowed side.

But, on the contrary, if we take our mental stand at the center, and from God's point of view, look down upon the events of time from their common center, with their eternal side illumined, as far as our vision goes, we shall see them fall into perfect order, and especially will we discern their symmetrical relation, as a whole, to the Source from which they issue, and the presiding Authority, by which, they are marshaled on their way.

It is self-evident, that if we look out, at any time, and from any point upon our environment, we must see things in the accidental relations in which they happen to group themselves along our line of vision, as we sweep past on our course. We must also, by the same necessity, see things in partial groups detached from their surroundings. If we conceive of any one event being caused by any other single event, we are led to confusion, because all things that exist constitute one articulated system, and every event is determined not by one single antecedent cause, but by the whole system of things, the entire equilibrium of the universe, that precedes it. So, if we conceive of God, as absolutely foreordaining individual events disconnected from the entire system of causes, conditions, and consequents of which they form a part, we shall necessarily be embarrassed, by contradictions. God could not certainly foreordain one event without foreordaining every event, without tearing the system to pieces and bringing utter confusion into natural law and human thought. For instance, a chronometer is a whole, consisting of many parts rigidly articulated and exquisitely adjusted to each other. It would, evidently, be impossible for the most skillful mechanic to run his fingers into the plexus of the wheels anti-springs, with the intent of controlling the action of one part irrespective of the rest, without working confusion and ruin.

Nevertheless, the chronometer, as a whole, with all its contents freely working, according to their law, undisturbed, may be lifted and carried round the world, without changing the relation of interdependence of part, on part. In like manner, if we will only make the effort to look upon the universe from God's point of view, as one all-comprehensive, complete system in itself, much of the apparent difficulty attending the principle of eternal predestination will disappear.

We can possibly conceive of the intelligence of God, only so far forth, as its laws are analogous to those of the intellect of man. We can only think of His mind, as eternally teeming with all possible systems, embracing all possible creatures, grouped in all possible relations, and subject to all possible laws. By the "possible," we mean every existence that can be under the limits of God's infinitely wise and righteous nature. Out of all possible systems, as wholes, God chose the existing system of the universe, including all existence, Spiritual, and material, that has been, is, or will be, constituted as it is, with all its parts, mutually interdependent as they are, as one whole. Viewed in this way, there is no conflict. The cause produces its effects, the event depends on its conditions; necessary agents act according to their nature, and free agents exercise spontaneously, their perfect freedom: all the parts of the system act according to their several kinds; nevertheless, the system as a whole, including all its parts, has been from eternity, made certain by the sovereign choice of God.

The point of view from which all difficulty disappears, is infinitely higher and commands infinitely wider reaches of thought, than the point of view from which foreordination and free-will are seen to be inconsistent. The new theology, asserting the narrowness of the old, is discarding the foreordination of Jehovah, as a worn out figment of the schools, discredited by the advanced culture of today. This is not the first time that the owls, mistaking the shadow of a passing eclipse for their native night, have prematurely hooted at the eagles, convinced that what is invisible to them, cannot possibly exist.

VII. It is often objected to the Biblical doctrine of predestination that, however much it may be apparently supported by the language of Scripture, it is utterly antagonized by

all established truth in every other department of human thought -- by all the united testimonies of philosophy and science. This preposterous claim is loudly voiced, even by some of the professed advocates of progress in theology. But, the facts are all absolutely to the contrary. So much is this the case, so universally do all the real governing currents of modern thought outside of Christian theology run in the direction of universal determinism, rather than in that of the admission of the indeterminate, the contingent, the spontaneous and free, that many of us who are the staunchest Calvinists feel that the need of the hour is not to emphasize a foreordination, which no clear, comprehensive thinker doubts, but to unite with our Arminian brethren in putting all emphasis and concentrating all attention on the vital fact of human freedom. That our consciousness of personal freedom is reliable, that we, in a true sense, stand outside of the current of necessary causation and do truly originate and give direction to our own actions, is a principle fundamental to all morals and all religion. Its permanent vindication is the one only and effectual solvent of all pantheism and all materialism. So strong does the current set on all sides throughout the sphere of human speculation, in favor of the conviction of universal preordination, that we can afford to leave its vindication to others, while we support with our suffrages, the neglected though essential counter-truth of the real freedom of the human soul.

All the philosophy and science of the century is deterministic. The great argument of Jonathan Edwards, against the liberty of contingency and in favor of the liberty of certainty, has been taken up and intensified by John Stuart Mill and Herbert Spencer, to support the doctrine of necessity. The universally received scientific principle of continuity involves this principle of foreordination. The now almost universally prevalent scientific doctrine of evolution, in all its infinite variety of forms, and in every form alike, involves this principle of foreordination. The funniest reading accessible, even in this humorous age, is that in which a progressive theologian, committing himself everywhere to the evolution method, yet declares that the doctrine of divine foreordination is false, because unscientific. All philosophies, which are either materialistic in tendency or pantheistic or purely theistic, necessarily involve the principle of foreordination.

Every conceivable philosophy must ultimately found the universe upon mechanism, chance, or upon personal intelligence and will. If mechanism be the ultimate self-existent principle out of which the universe is developed and operated, then fatalism is true. If chance be the ultimate principle, then accident, contingency, uncertainty must be in the method, and chaos, the ultimate goal. If a personal, intelligent will be the ultimate principle, then Providence is the executive, in time of an eternal purpose. All philosophies may be classified under these heads. All the possibilities of speculation must lie within these limits. Instead of our doctrine of foreordination, being the same with the heathen doctrine of fate, it is its absolute opposite and only alternative. We are shut up to a choice between the two -- either a fatalism, which results from mechanical co-action, or a fatalism, which results from a mindless and purposeless chance, or an all-controlling Providence of a heavenly Father, who, in the exercise of His own personal freedom, has made room for ours. All thinkers, who understand themselves, know that they run along one or other of these lines. The wiseacres who plead the authority of philosophy and science, as inconsistent with the Scriptural doctrine of predestination, may be safely left to themselves. They will not be found to be dangerous enemies, even behind our backs.

VIII. Here, as everywhere else, there is essential truth on both sides of every controversy, and the real truth, is time, whole truth, its entire Catholic body. Arminianism, in the abstract, as a historical scheme, is a heresy, holding half the truth. Calvinism is a historical scheme, which in its best representatives, comprehends the whole truth with considerable completeness. But, the case is essentially different when we come to consider the great co-existing bodies of Christian people, calling themselves respectively, Calvinists and Arminians. Each of these parties holds all essential truth, and therefore, they hold actually very much, the same truth. The Arminians think anti, speak very much like Calvinists, when they come to talk with God, in either the confession of sin or the supplication for grace. They both, alike in that attitude, recognize the sovereignty of God and the guilt anti, helplessness of men. Indeed, how could it be otherwise? What room is there for anything, other than essential Calvinism on one's knees? On the other hand, the Calvinist thinks and

speaks like the better class of Arminians, when he addresses the consciences of men, and pleads with them, as free, responsible agents, to repent and believe in Christ. The difference between the best of either class, is one of emphasis, rather than of essential principle. Each is time, complement of the other. Each is necessary, to restrain, correct, and supply the one-sided strain of the other. They, together, give origin to the blended strain from which issues the perfect music, which utters the perfect truth.

IX. It is now-a-days, frequently predicted by men in high places, that the distinctive doctrines of Calvinism are doomed. The future is uncertain; the role of prophet is unprofitable and unbecoming. But, the history of the past, stands fast. The doctrine of predestination, with its associated system of truths, has had a wonderful history. All world-movers have believed it surely and have taught it clearly -- Paul, Augustine, all the Reformers, without exception. During the eleven hundred years, which elapsed from the time of Augustine to that of Luther, all the best of time schoolmen, all the great missionary movements, the revivals of true religion, the extension of popular education, and all great healthy political reforms, had their common inspiration in Augustinian theology. All time great national movements in France, Germany Switzerland, Italy, and Britain, in the era of the Reformation, and all the great national leaders, as Luther, Zwingli, Calvin, Cranmer, and Knox, were distinctively Augustinian, and were rooted in predestination. The most moral people of all history, the Puritans, Pietists, Huguenots, Reformed Dutch of Holland and German of the Palatinate, and the Scotch and the Scotch-Irish of Ulster and the United States, were all Calvinists. Calvin, William of Orange, Cromwell, and the Presbyterian and Congregational founders of the government of the United States, and all the great creators of modern civil liberty, were Calvinists. All modern provision for universal education, sprang from time, Scotch parochial school and the New England College. The patriots, free-state makers, martyrs, missionaries of all the modern era, have been, in nine hundred and ninety-nine, parts out of the thousand, distinctively Calvinist.

This history is glorious and secure, past all contradiction. It is natural also -- a natural outgrowth of consequences, out of principles. Predestination exalts God, and abases

man, before God. It makes all men low before God, but high and strong before kings. It founds on a basis of eternal rock, one absolute Sovereign, to whose will there is no limit, but it levels all other Sovereigns, in the dust. It renders Christ, great, and the believing sinner, infinitely secure, in Him. It establishes the highest conceivable standard of righteousness, and secures the operation of the most effective motives, to obedience. It extinguishes fear, it makes victory certain, it inspires with enthusiasm, it makes both, the heart and the arm strong. The Ironsides of Cromwell made the decree of predestination their base; hence, they never lost a battle, and always began the swelling chorus of victory, from the first moment that the ranks were formed. The man, to whom in all the universe, there is no God, is an atheist. The man, to whom God is distant, and to whom the influence of God is vague and uncertain, is an Arminian. But, he who altogether lives and moves, and has all his being in the immanent Jehovah, is a Calvinist.

### Author

A. A. Hodge (1823-1886), Professor in Systematic Theology at Princeton Seminary from 1877 until his death in 1886, urged that, the aim of every Christian teacher, should be to produce a vitalizing impression -- giving students 'theology, exposition, demonstration, orthodoxy, learning, but giving all this to them warm.' 'He taught the knowledge of God,' said one of his hearers, 'with the learning of a scholar and the enthusiasm of a loving Christian.' These qualities, not only crowded his classrooms, they also led to frequent appeals for the delivery of popular lectures. The one present here, is one of nineteen lectures, delivered in Philadelphia, early in 1886. The whole of them, has been published in one volume, *Evangelical Theology: Lectures on Doctrine* by the Banner of Truth Trust.

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## Predestination - Foreknowledge

### Predestination - A Definition

Predestination is defined as the act of predestinating, which is an action of God - Who is eternal and foreordains what comes to pass on earth. This idea is repugnant to some. The idea that an entity has the right to ordain what happens on earth, is something that man, in his natural state, has rebelled against from the dawn of time. However, the Old Testament starts with, "In the beginning, God...". This is an unambiguous statement. God existed before, continues to exist, and will always exist (Revelation 1:4). God has the sovereign right of Creation over the earth and man and He makes no apologies for saying, "Thus, saith the LORD!" This statement does not require man's understanding or acceptance to be true.

The truth of predestination is wrapped up in the very character of God.

- God is sovereign, which means, that He has absolute authority over all that He has Created and He has Created "all things" (Genesis 1:1).
- God is omniscient, meaning that He has all knowledge and without Him, no knowledge exists (Job 37:16).
- God is omnipresent, giving Him the ability to be everywhere, at one time (Psalms 139:1-12).
- God is omnipotent, which means, that God is all-powerful with a determination to carry out His purpose and plan throughout time into eternity (1 Chronicles 29:11).

There are no created beings that have these attributes; only the great "I AM" (Exodus 3:14) has them. God, who is sovereign, having all knowledge, is everywhere, at one time, and is all-powerful. He loves His Creation and has offered us His grace with unmerited favor in the face of man's constant and consistent rebellion.

## **Predestination - A Distinction**

When we look at the idea of predestination, it is necessary to make a distinction between two different decreed events. The first includes events that are divinely caused (caused by God), such as the salvation of the elect. The second of decreed events are divinely permitted (permitted or allowed by God).

God does not predetermine the evil acts of men, nor does God cause them. Rather, these permitted acts mean, that God knows beforehand how people will react in each circumstance. He allows people to make autonomous decisions, the choice to do good or evil. God's foreknowledge of the evil, that people perpetrate onto others, caused Him to Create within humans, the ability to overcome that evil. And the good that people are capable of, was predetermined by God, to be blessed when doing good was chosen. These blessings enable humans to win over evil, while fulfilling God's total plan.

## **Predestination - A Decree**

Predestination is the decree of God, by which, certain souls are foreordained to salvation called the elect. Again, this is a concept that many see, as somehow unfair. However, all of the attributes of God, allow Him to know history in advance. Therefore, it can be said, that we are "preordained" or elected by pre-knowledge, because time has no rule over God. But, didn't God give man volition (exercising one's own will)? The answer to that, is yes, however, since God is all knowing, He already knows the outcome of the choices men will make and He uses those choices to bring about His purpose.

"And we know, that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called, according to His purpose for them. For God knew His people in advance, and He chose them to become like His Son, so that His Son would be the firstborn, with many brothers and sisters. And having chosen them, He called them to come to Him. And He gave them right, standing with Himself, and He promised them His glory" (Romans 8:28-30).

God has made salvation possible for anyone who wants it. He already knows who will accept His plan of salvation. This does not negate man's choice; rather, it is confirmation of God's grace, that some do choose, salvation. Predestination means, to mark out or determine beforehand. Predestination may raise some intellectual problems, but that is because man tries to wrap his finite mind around an infinite God. However, those who accept the gift of salvation, become the "elect" of God.

"Furthermore, because of Christ, we have received an inheritance from God, for He chose us from the beginning, and all things happen just as He decided, long ago" (Ephesians 1:11).

"But, people who aren't Christians, can't understand these truths, from God's Spirit. It all sounds foolish to them, because only those who have the Spirit, can understand what the Spirit means." (1 Corinthians 2:14).

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**Predestination** (also linked with foreknowledge) is a religious concept, which involves the relationship between God and His Creation. The religious character of predestination distinguishes it from other ideas about determinism and free will. Those who believe in predestination, such as John Calvin, believe that before the Creation, God determined the fate of the universe, throughout all of time and space.

### **Contrasted with Other Kinds of Determinism**

Predestination: The Divine foreordaining of all that will happen; with regard to the salvation of some and none to others. It has been particularly associated with the teachings of St. Augustine of Hippo and of John Calvin.

*Predestination* may sometimes be used to refer to other, materialistic, Spiritualist, non-theistic or polytheistic ideas of determinism, *destiny*, *fate*, *doom*, or *karma*. Such beliefs or philosophical systems may hold, that any outcome is finally determined by the complex interaction of multiple, possibly immanent, possibly impersonal, possibly equal

forces, rather than the issue of a Creator's conscious choice.

For example, some may speak of predestination from a purely, physical perspective, such as in a discussion of time travel. In this case, rather than referring to the afterlife, predestination refers to any events that will occur in the future. In a predestined universe, the future is immutable and only one set of events can possibly occur; in a non-predestined universe, the future is mutable. In Chinese Buddhism, *predestination* is a translation of *yuanfen*, which does not necessarily imply the existence or involvement of a deity. *Predestination*, in this sense, takes on a very literal meaning: *pre-* (before) and *destiny*, in a straightforward way, indicating that some events seem bound to happen.

Finally, antithetical to determinism of any kind, are theories of the cosmos, which assert that any outcome is ultimately unpredictable, the ludibrium of luck, chance, or chaos.

All conceptions of an ordered or rational cosmos have determinist implications, as a logical consequence of the idea of predictability. But, *predestination*, usually refers to, a specifically religious type of determinism, especially as found in various monotheistic systems, where omniscience is attributed to God, including Christianity and Islam.

It is also the concept of destiny in a path to religious freedom.

### **Predestination and Omniscience**

Discussion of predestination, usually involves, consideration of whether God is omniscient, or eternal, or atemporal (free from limitations of time, or even causality). In terms of these ideas, God may see the past, present, and future, so that God, effectively knows the future. If God, in some sense, knows ahead of time, what will happen, then events in the universe are effectively predetermined, from God's point of view. This is a form of determinism, but not predestination, since the latter term implies,

that God has actually determined (rather than simply saw), in advance, the destiny of creatures.

Within Christendom, there is considerable disagreement about God's role, in settling ultimate destinies (that is, eternal life or eternal destruction). Christians, who follow teachers, such as St. Augustine and John Calvin, generally accept, that God does decide the eternal destinations of each person, so that their future actions or beliefs follow according to God's choice. A contrasting Christian view, maintains, that God is completely sovereign over all things, but that He chose to give each individual free will, which each person can exercise to accept or reject God's offer of salvation, and hence, God's actions and determinations follow, according to man's choice.

Judaism may accept the possibility, that God is atemporal; some forms of Jewish theology teach this virtually, as a principle of faith, while other forms of Judaism, do not. Jews may use the term, *omniscience*, or *preordination*, as a corollary of omniscience, but normally reject the idea of predestination, as being incompatible with the free-will and responsibility of moral agents, and it therefore, has no place in their religion.

Islam, traditionally, has strong views of predestination, similar to some, found in Christianity. In Islam, Allah both, knows and ordains, whatever comes to pass. Muslims believe, that God is literally atemporal, eternal, and omniscient.

In philosophy, the relation between foreknowledge and predestination, is a central part of Newcomb's paradox.

### **Predestination in Christianity**

Christians understand the doctrine of predestination, in terms of God's work of salvation, in the world. The doctrine is a tension between the divine perspective, in which God saves those whom He chooses from eternity, apart from human action, and the human perspective, in which each person is responsible for his or her choice, to

accept or reject God. The views on predestination, within Christianity, vary somewhat in emphasis, on one of these two perspectives.

In terms of ultimates, with God's decision to Create, as the ultimate beginning, and the ultimate outcome, a belief system has a doctrine of predestination if it teaches:

1. God's decision, assignment or declaration, concerning the lot of people is conceived, as occurring in some sense, **prior** to the outcome, and
2. The decision is fully predictive of the outcome, and not merely, probable.

There are numerous ways to describe the spectrum of beliefs, concerning predestination, in Christian thinking. To some extent, this spectrum has analogies in other monotheistic religions, although in other religions, the term, *predestination* may not be used. For example, teaching on predestination may vary in terms of three considerations.

1. Is God's predetermining decision, based solely, on a knowledge of His own will, or does it also include a knowledge of whatever will happen?
2. How particular is God's prior decision: is it concerned with particular persons and events, or is it limited to broad categories of people and things?
3. How free is God, in effecting His part, in the eventual outcome? Is God bound or limited by conditions external to His own will, willingly or not, in order that what has been determined, will come to pass?

Furthermore, the same sort of considerations apply to the freedom of man's will.

1. Assuming that an individual had no choice in who, when, and where to come into being: How are the choices of existence determined by what he is?
2. Assuming that not all possible choices are available to him: How capable is the individual to desire all choices available, in order to choose from among them?
3. How capable is an individual to put into effect what he desires?

### **Various Views on Christian Predestination**

There is a resounding consistency in the early Church Fathers, regarding the freedom of human choices. This polemic was crucial in the Christian confrontation with Cynicism and some of the chief forms of Gnosticism, such as Manichaeism, which taught, that man is, by nature, flawed, and therefore, not responsible for evil in himself or in the world. At the same time, belief in a sovereign and predestinating God was held without clear attempt to reconcile these ideas with one another. That this was an uneasy tension, eventually became obvious, with the confrontation between Augustine of Hippo and Pelagius, culminating in condemnation of Pelagianism (as interpreted by Augustine) in 417. The British monk, Pelagius denied Augustine's view of "predestination" in order to affirm, that salvation is achieved by an act of free-will.

Leading to this controversy, Augustine's own early writings clearly affirmed, that God's predestinating grace was granted on the basis of His foreknowledge of the human desire to pursue salvation. After 396, however, his understanding began to turn increasingly toward the necessity of God granting this grace in order for the desire for salvation to be awakened. Thus, his thoughts took a more determinist direction, especially as Augustine wrestled with the implications of the writings of the Apostle Paul.

One of Augustine's motivating concerns was the question of truth, and his solution to

the problem of salvation was not to deny that man has freedom to choose, but to assert that on account of Original Sin, human free choice is necessarily subject to error and enslaved to sin (*liberum arbitrium captivatum*). The individual does not lack knowledge of what God's will is and knows it to be good, but is deprived of the ability to desire to do God's will, and subsequently freely chooses what is desired, which is sin. The grace of God cures this disease, which has as its main symptom, the absence of any desire to be cured, setting the person free to choose God's will (*liberum arbitrium liberatum*). God's grace acts first on the human heart, to awaken the desire to do His will, and cooperates with the individual in a process of granting prayers for the greater desire and ability to choose His will and to do it, according to Augustine's later thought on the issues.

Augustine's formulation, is neither complete nor universally accepted, by Christians. In a real sense, all ideas of predestination are further developments of this same struggle to reconcile the idea of free will with the idea of predestinating grace, both of which, are affirmed in Scripture and throughout Christian tradition. Especially in Western Christianity, the history of this development is traced through Augustine.

### **Conditional Predestination**

Conditional Predestination, or more commonly referred to as, conditional election, is a theological stance, stemming from the writings and teachings of Jacobus Arminius, after whom, Arminianism, is named. Arminius studied under the staunch Reformed scholar, Theodore Beza, whose views of election, Arminius eventually argued, could not reconcile freedom with moral responsibility.

Arminius used a philosophy called, Molinism (named for the philosopher, Luis de Molina, that attempted to reconcile freedom with God's omniscience. They both saw human freedom in terms of the Libertarian philosophy: man's choice is not decided by God's choice, thus God's choice is "conditional," depending on what man chooses. Arminius saw God, "looking down the corridors of time," to see the free choices of man, and choosing those who will respond in faith and love to God's love and promises,

revealed in Jesus.

Arminianism sees the choice of Christ as an impossibility, apart from God's grace; and the freedom to choose is given to all, because God's prevenient grace is universal (given to everyone). Therefore, God predestines, on the basis of foreknowledge of how some will respond to His universal love ("conditional"). In contrast, Calvinism views universal grace, as resistible and not sufficient for leading to salvation -- or denies universal grace altogether -- and instead, supposes grace that leads to salvation to be particular and irresistible, given to some, but not to others, on the basis of God's predestinating choice ("unconditional"). This is also known as, "double-predestination."

### **Temporal predestination**

Temporal predestination is the view, that God only determines temporal matters, and not eternal ones. This Christian view, is analogous to the traditional Jewish view, which distinguishes between *preordination* and *predestination*. Temporal matters are pre-ordained by God, but eternal matters, being supra-temporal, are subject to absolute freedom of choice. J. Kenneth Grider

### **Infralapsarianism**

Infralapsarianism (also called, sublapsarianism) holds, that predestination logically coincides with the preordination of man's fall into sin. That is, God predestined sinful men for salvation. Therefore, according to this view, God is the "ultimate cause," but, not the "proximate source" or "author" of sin. Infralapsarians often emphasize a difference between God's decree (which is inviolable and inscrutable), and His revealed will (against which man is disobedient). Proponents, also typically emphasize, the grace and mercy of God toward all men, although teaching also, that only some are predestined for salvation.

In common English parlance, the doctrine of predestination, often has, particular reference to the doctrines of Calvinism. The version of predestination, espoused by

John Calvin, after whom Calvinism is named, is sometimes referred to as, “double-predestination,” because in it, God predestines some people for salvation (i.e., Unconditional election) and some for condemnation (i.e., Reprobation). Calvin, himself, defines predestination as, “the eternal decree of God, by which, He determined with Himself, whatever He wished to happen, with regard to every man. Not all, are Created on equal terms, but some are preordained to eternal life, others to eternal damnation; and, accordingly, as each has been Created for one or other of these ends, we say that he has been predestinated to life or to death.”

On the spectrum of beliefs, concerning predestination, Calvinism is the strongest form among Christians. It teaches, that God’s predestinating decision, is based on the knowledge of His own will, rather than foreknowledge, concerning every particular person and event; and, God continually acts with entire freedom, in order to bring about His will in completeness, but in such a way, that the freedom of the creature, is not violated, “but rather, established.”

Calvinists, who hold the infralapsarian view of predestination, usually prefer that term to, “sublapsarianism,” perhaps with the intent of blocking the inference that they believe predestination is, on the basis of foreknowledge (*sublapsarian*, meaning assuming the fall into sin). The different terminology, has the benefit of distinguishing the Calvinist double-predestination version of infralapsarianism, from Lutheranism’s view, that predestination is a mystery, which forbids the unprofitable intrusion of prying minds.

Calvinists seek never to divide predestination in a mathematical way. Their doctrine is uninterested, in the abstract, in questions of “how much” either, God or man, is responsible for a particular destiny. Questions of “how much” will become hopelessly entangled in paradox, Calvinists teach, regardless of the view of predestination adopted. Instead, Calvinism divides the issues of predestination, according to two kinds of being, knowledge, and will, distinguishing that which is divine, from that which is human. Therefore, it is not so much an issue of quantity, but of distinct roles or modes of being. God is not a creature, nor the creature God in knowledge, will, freedom,

ability, responsibility, or anything else. Calvinists will often attribute salvation, entirely to God; and yet, they will also assert, that it is man's responsibility to pursue obedience. As the archetypical illustration of this idea, they believe Jesus, in His Words and work, humanly fulfilled all that He, as part of the Trinity, had determined from the Father, should be done. What He did humanly, is distinguishable, but not separate, from what He did divinely.

### **Supralapsarianism**

Supralapsarianism is the doctrine that God's decree of predestination for salvation and reprobation, logically precedes, His preordination of man's fall into sin. That is, God decided to save, and to damn; He then determined, that the fall of man into sin would accomplish His purpose. It is a matter of controversy whether or not Calvin, himself, held this view.

### **Predestination in the Bible**

Some Biblical verses often used as sources for Christian beliefs in predestination are below.

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every Spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be Holy and blameless before Him. In love, He **predestined** us to adoption as sons, through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will,...” (Eph. 1:3-5, NASB)

“And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called, according to His purpose. For those whom He foreknew, He also **predestined** to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; and these whom He **predestined**, He also call-

ed; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.” (Rom. 8:28-30, NASB)

“...but we speak God’s wisdom in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God **predestined** before the ages to our glory;...” (1 Cor. 2:7, NASB)

“For truly, in this city, there were gathered together against Your Holy Servant, Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose **predestined** to occur.” (Acts 4:27-28, NASB)

“But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace, you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come, He might show the surpassing riches of His grace, in kindness, toward us in Christ Jesus. For, by grace, you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.” (Eph. 2:4-9, NASB)

“...Who has saved us and called us with a Holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was granted us in Christ Jesus, from all eternity...” (2 Tim. 1:9, NASB)

Your eyes have seen my unformed substance;  
:And, in Your book were all written  
:The days that were ordained for me,  
:When, as yet, there was not one of them. (Psa. 139:16, NASB)

“So, then it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God, who has mercy. [verse 17 omitted] So then, He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens, whom He desires.”  
(Rom. 9:16-18, NASB).

## **Jewish Views**

Generally speaking, Reform Judaism has no strong doctrine of predestination. The idea that God is omnipotent and omniscient didn't formally exist in Judaism, during the Biblical era, but rather, was a later development due to the influence of neo-Platonic and neo-Aristotelian philosophy. Many modern Jewish thinkers, in the 20th century, have resolved the dialectical tension by holding that God, is simply, not omnipotent, in the commonly used sense of that word. These thinkers are primarily not Orthodox Jews. Orthodox Jewish rabbis, generally affirm, that God must be viewed as omnipotent, but they have varying definitions of what the word, *omnipotent* means. Thus, one finds that some Modern Orthodox theologians have views that are essentially the same, as non-Orthodox theologians, but they use different terminology.

One noted Jewish philosopher, Hasdai Crescas, resolved this dialectical tension, by taking the position that free-will doesn't exist. Hence, all of a person's actions are pre-determined by the moment of their birth, and thus, their judgement in the eyes of God, (so to speak) is effectively pre-ordained. However, in this scheme, this is not a result of God's predetermining one's fate, but rather, from the view, that the universe is deterministic. Crescas's views, on this topic, were rejected by Judaism, at large. In later centuries, this idea, independently developed among some in the Chabad, (Lubavitch) sect of Hasidic Judaism. Many individuals, within Chabad, take this view seriously, and hence, effectively deny the existence of free-will.

However, many Chabad (Lubavitch) Jews attempt to hold, *both* views. They affirm, as infallible, their rebbe's teachings, that God knows and controls the fate of all, yet, at the same time, affirm the classical Jewish belief in free-will (i.e., no such thing, as determinism). The inherent contradiction, between the two, results in their belief, that

such contradictions are only “apparent,” due to man’s inherent lack of ability to understand greater truths and due to the fact, that Creator and Created, exist in different realities.

One does not have to be a Chabad Hassid, to believe in this, however. It is enough to read the statement in Pirkei Avot: “Everything is predetermined, but freedom of will, is given.” The same idea is strongly repeated by Rambam (Mishneh Torah, Laws of Repentance, Chapter 5).

Many other Jews (Orthodox, Conservative, Reform and Secular), affirm that since free-will exists, then by definition, one’s fate is not preordained. It is held, as a tenet of faith, that whether God is omniscient or not, nothing interferes with mankind’s free-will. Some Jewish theologians, both during the medieval era and today, have attempted to formulate a philosophy, in which, free-will is preserved, while also affirming, that God has knowledge of what decisions people will make in the future. Whether or not these two ideas are mutually compatible, or whether there is a contradiction between the two, is still a matter of great study and interest in philosophy today.

### **Islamic views**

In Islam, “predestination,” is the usual English language, rendering of a belief, that Muslims call, *al-qada wa al-qadar*, in Arabic. The phrase means, “the divine decree and the predestination;” *al-qadar*, derives from a root, that means, *to measure out*.

The phrase reflects a Muslim doctrine, that God has measured out and foreordained, the span of every person’s life, their lot of good or ill fortune, and whether they will follow the straight (righteous) path or not. Therefore, free-will doesn’t *actually* exist. When referring to the future, Muslims frequently qualify any predictions of what will come to pass, with the phrase, *inshallah*, Arabic for “if God wills.” The phrase recognizes that human knowledge of the future is limited, and that all that may or may not come to pass, is under the control of God. Humans do not have control in making decisions in their life. There is no “free-will” to choose to do certain things or not to do

certain things. People can believe they have control over their lives, but they are not able to do anything, without it being God's will first. Nothing is allowed to come to pass, unless it is the will of God, hence, the phrase, "if God wills." A related phrase, *mashallah*, indicates acceptance of what God has ordained, in terms of good or ill fortune, that may befall a believer.

## Shia Islam

In Shia Islam, there is a greater emphasis on free-will, and the importance of personal decision, which will be called back on the Day of Judgement. Predestination is a way of thinking that is challenged by the Imams of Shia Islam, in many speeches and letters. The main factor in determining how one's reality is processed, has to do with his/her "nearness" to God. Therefore, the levels of relationship that one has with God, is what determines what a person may be "allowed" to do. For example, drinking alcoholic beverages is a sin, according to the religion of Islam. If a person, who has "turned his back" on God decides to drink, there will be no obstacle between himself and the drink. Accordingly, a drink voids 40 days of prayers and supplication, which distances that soul "further" from God. However, if the person is a "pious" believer, who has fallen to despair due to some difficulty and decides to have a drink to give up his state and position, there may be numerous obstacles in the universe between him and the drink, until he finally gives up on that endeavor and returns repentant. The hopelessness in human action, is what is disputed by Shia philosophers, with those who lean far toward predestination.

## Islam and Christianity

Although comparable in broad terms, the differences between Christian and Islamic ideas of predestination, are complex. These differences are due to the distinctives of each faith's belief system. In broad terms, the doctrine of predestination refers to inevitability, as a general principle, and usually more particularly, refers to the exercise

of God's will, as it relates to the future of members of the human race, considered either, as groups or as individuals, with special concern for issues of human responsibility, as it relates to the sovereignty of God. Predestination always involves issues of the Creator's personality and will; and consequently, the different versions of the doctrine of predestination, go hand in hand, with appropriately different conceptions of the contribution any creature is able to make toward its own present condition, or future destiny.

### **Theological Determinism**

**Theological determinism** is a form of determinism, which states that all events that happen, are preordained, or predestined to happen, by a monotheistic God.

Theological determinists exist in a number of religions, including Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

Two forms of theological determinism exist. The first one accepts, that humans have free-will to choose their actions, holding that God, whilst knowing their actions before they happen, does not affect the outcome. The other form, known as "Hard Theological Determinism," holds, that free-will does not exist, and God has absolute control over a person's actions. The most prominent theologian, espousing this latter view, was John Calvin, a late mediaeval French Christian, who formed the doctrine of Calvinism, a form of Protestantism.

Many other Christians have opposed this view. Saint Thomas Aquinas, the mediaeval Roman Catholic theologian, believed strongly, that humanity had free-will, saying that, "man chooses, not of necessity, but freely." The Jesuits were among the leading opponents of this view, because they held, that divine grace was actual, in the sense, that grace is, among other things, participative, and that man could freely benefit from grace, by a mediation between his own imperfect will and the infinite mercy of God.

## **Free-Will in Theology**

**Free-will in theology** is an important part of the debate on free-will, in general. This course discusses the doctrine of free-will, as it has been, and is, interpreted within the various branches of Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, & Zoroastrianism.

### **In Christian Thought**

In Christian theology, God is described as omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent; a notion, which some people, Christians and non-Christians alike, believe implies that not only has God always known what choices individuals will make tomorrow, but has actually determined those choices. That is, they believe, by virtue of His foreknowledge, He knows what will influence individual choices, and by virtue of His omnipotence, He controls those factors. This becomes especially important for the doctrines relating to salvation and predestination. Other branches, such as Methodists, believe that while God is omnipotent and knows the choices that individuals will make, He still gives individuals the power to ultimately choose (or reject) everything, regardless of any internal or external conditions, relating to the choice. For example, when Jesus was nailed on the cross, the two criminals, one on each side, were about to die. Only one asked Jesus for forgiveness, while the other, even at the end of his life with nothing else to lose, mocked Jesus. In the view of Methodists and others who believe in free-will, this was a free and personal choice between everlasting death and everlasting life.

### **In Lutheranism**

Lutherans adhere to divine monergism, the teaching that salvation is by God's act alone, and therefore, reject the idea that humans, in their fallen state, have a free-will concerning Spiritual matters. Lutherans believe that although humans have free-will, concerning civil righteousness, they cannot work Spiritual righteousness without the Holy Spirit, since righteousness in the heart cannot be wrought in the absence of the Holy Spirit. In other words, humanity is free to choose and act, in every regard, except

for the choice of salvation.

Lutherans teach, that sinners, while capable of doing works that are outwardly “good,” are not capable of doing works that satisfy God’s justice. Every human thought and deed is infected with sin and sinful motives.

Orthodox Lutheran theology holds, that God made the world, including humanity, perfect, Holy, and sinless. However, Adam and Eve chose to disobey God, trusting in their own strength, knowledge, and wisdom. Consequently, people are saddled with original sin, born sinful, and unable to avoid committing sinful acts. For Lutherans, original sin is the “chief sin, a root and fountainhead of all actual sins.”

According to Lutherans, God preserves His Creation, in doing so, cooperates with everything that happens, and guides the universe. While God cooperates with both, good and evil deeds, with evil deeds He does so, only inasmuch, as they are deeds, but not with the evil in them. God concurs with an act’s effect, but He does not cooperate in the corruption of an act or the evil of its effect. Lutherans believe everything exists for the sake of the Christian Church, and that God guides everything for its welfare and growth.

Lutherans believe, that the elect are predestined to salvation. Lutherans believe Christians should be assured that they are among the predestined. Lutherans believe that all who trust in Jesus alone, can be certain of their salvation, for it is in Christ’s work and His promises in which their certainty lies. According to Lutheranism, the central final hope of the Christian, is “the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting,” as confessed in the Apostles’ Creed, rather than predestination. Conversion or regeneration, in the strict sense of the term, is the work of divine grace and power, by which, man, born of the flesh and void of all power to think, to will, or to do any good thing, and dead in sin, is through the Gospel and Holy baptism, taken from a state of sin and Spiritual death, under God’s wrath into a state of Spiritual life of faith and grace, rendered able to will and to do what is Spiritually good, and especially, led to accept the

benefits of the redemption, which is in Christ Jesus.

Lutherans disagree with those that make predestination the source of salvation, rather than Christ's suffering, death, and resurrection. Lutherans reject the Calvinist doctrine of the perseverance of the saints. Like both Calvinist camps, Lutherans view the work of salvation, as monergistic, in that, "the natural [that is, corrupted and divinely unrenewed] powers of man, cannot do anything or help towards salvation" (Formula of Concord: Solid Declaration, art. ii, par. 71), and Lutherans go further along the same lines, as the Free Grace advocates, to say that the recipient of saving grace, need not cooperate with it. Hence, Lutherans believe that a true Christian (that is, a genuine recipient of saving grace), can lose his or her salvation, "but the cause is not as though God were unwilling to grant grace for perseverance to those in whom He has begun the good work...[but, that these persons] willfully turn away..." (Formula of Concord: Solid Declaration, art. xi. par. 42). Unlike Calvinists, Lutherans do not believe in a predestination to damnation. Instead, Lutherans teach eternal damnation, is a result of the unbeliever's sins, rejection of the forgiveness of sins, and unbelief.

### **In Calvinism**

Calvinist Protestants embrace the idea, that God chose who would be saved and who would not be saved, prior to the Creation. They quote Ephesians 1:4, "For He chose us in Him, before the Creation of the world, to be Holy and blameless in His sight" and also, 2:8, "For it is, by grace, you are saved, through faith, and this, not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." One of the strongest defenders of this theological point of view, was the Puritan-American preacher and theologian, Jonathan Edwards.

Edwards believed that indeterminism was incompatible with individual dependence on God, and hence, with His sovereignty. He reasoned, that if individuals' responses to God's grace are contra-causally free, then their salvation depends partly, on them, and therefore, God's sovereignty is not "absolute and universal." Edward's book, *Freedom of the Will*, defends theological determinism. In this book, Edwards attempts to show

that libertarianism, is incoherent. For example, he argues that by 'self-determination,' the libertarian must mean either that one's actions, including one's acts of willing, are preceded by an act of free-will or that one's acts of will lack sufficient causes. The first leads to an infinite regress, while the second implies that acts of will happen accidentally, and hence, can't make someone "better or worse, any more than a tree is better than other trees, because it oftener happens to be lit upon by a swan or nightingale; or a rock, more vicious than other rocks, because rattlesnakes have happened oftener to crawl over it."

It should not be thought that this view completely denies freedom of choice, however. It claims that man is free to act on his strongest moral impulse and volition, which is externally determined, but is not free to act contrary to them, or to alter them. Proponents, such as John L. Girardeau, have indicated their belief, that moral neutrality is impossible; that even if it were possible, and one were equally inclined to contrary options, one could make no choice at all; that if one is inclined, however slightly, toward one option, then that person will necessarily choose that one, over any others.

Some non-Calvinist Christians attempt a reconciliation of the dual concepts of predestination and free-will, by pointing to the situation of God, as Christ. In taking the form of a man, a necessary element of this process was, that Jesus Christ lived the existence of a mortal. When Jesus was born, He was not born with the omniscient power of God, the Creator, but with the mind of a human child - yet, He was still God, in essence. The precedent this creates, is that God is able to will the abandonment of His knowledge, or ignore knowledge, while remaining fully God. Thus, it is not inconceivable, that although omniscience demands that God knows what the future holds for individuals, it is within His power to deny this knowledge, in order to preserve individual free-will. Other theologians argue, that the Calvinist-Edwardsean view suggests, that if all human volitions are predetermined by God, then all actions dictated by fallen will of man, necessarily satisfy His sovereign decree. Hence, it is impossible to act outside of God's perfect will, a conclusion some non-Calvinists claim poses a serious problem for ethics and moral theology.

An early proposal toward such a reconciliation states, that God is, in fact, not aware of future events, but rather, being eternal, He is outside time, and sees the past, present, and future, as one whole creation. Consequently, it is not as though God would know, “in advance,” that Jeffrey Dahmer would become guilty of homicide, years prior to the event as an example, but that He was aware of it from all eternity, viewing all time, as a single present. This was the view offered by Boethius in Book V of the *Consolation of Philosophy*.

Calvinist theologian, Loraine Boettner argued, that the doctrine of divine foreknowledge, does not escape the alleged problems of divine foreordination. He wrote that, “what God foreknows must, in the very nature of the case, be as fixed and certain, as what is foreordained; and if one is inconsistent with the free agency of man, the other is also. Foreordination renders the events certain, while foreknowledge presupposes that they are certain.” Some Christian theologians, feeling the bite of this argument, have opted to limit the doctrine of foreknowledge, if not do away with it altogether, thus forming, a new school of thought, similar to Socinianism and Process Theology, called Open Theism.

### **In Catholicism**

Theologians of the Catholic Church, universally embrace, the idea of free-will, but generally, do not view free-will, as existing apart from or in contradiction, to grace. St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas, wrote extensively on free-will, with Augustine focusing on the importance of free-will, in his responses to the Manichaeans, and also, on the limitations of a concept of unlimited free-will, as denial of grace, in his refutations of Pelagius. Catholic Christianity’s emphasis on free-will and grace, is often contrasted with predestination in Reformed Protestant Christianity, especially after the Counter-Reformation, but in understanding differing conceptions of free-will, it is just as important to understand the differing conceptions of the nature of God, focusing on the idea, that God can be all-powerful and all-knowing, even while people continue to exercise free-will, because God does not exist in time.

## **In Eastern Christianity**

### **Oriental Orthodox**

The concept of free-will, is also very important, in the Oriental Orthodox Churches, especially in the Coptic affiliated ones. As in Judaism, free-will is regarded, as axiomatic. Everyone is regarded, as having a free choice, as to in what measure he or she will follow his or her conscience or arrogance, these two having been appointed for each individual. The more one follows one's conscience, the more it brings one good results, and the more one follows one's arrogance, the more it brings one bad results. Following only one's arrogance, is sometimes likened to the dangers of falling into a pit, while walking in pitch darkness, without the light of conscience to illuminate the path. Very similar doctrines, have also found written expression, in the Dead Sea Scrolls "Manual of Discipline," and in some religious texts, possessed by the Beta Israel Jews of Ethiopia.

### **Eastern Orthodox**

Eastern Orthodox Church holds a view, different from the Calvinist, Arminian, Lutheran, and Catholic ones. The difference is in the interpretation of the Original sin, where the Eastern Orthodox, are alone, (with Oriental Orthodox) in not believing in Total depravity. The Orthodox do not accept the Pelagian view, that the Original sin did not damage human nature, they accept that the human nature is depraved, but not totally, and they avoid calling it, "depraved," preferring "fallen nature."

Orthodox Church holds to the teaching of synergy (meaning, working together), which says, that man has the freedom to, and must, if he wants to be saved, choose to accept and work with the grace of God. The first who defined this teaching was John Cassian, 4th century Church Father, and a pupil of John Chrysostom, and all Eastern Fathers accept it. He taught that, "Divine grace is necessary to enable a sinner to return unto God and live, yet, man must first, of himself, desire and attempt to choose and obey

God,” and that, “Divine grace is indispensable for salvation, but it does not necessarily need to precede a free human choice, because, despite the weakness of human volition, the will can take the initiative toward God.”

Some Orthodox use the parable of a drowning man to plainly illustrate the teaching of synergy: God, from the ship, throws a rope to a drowning man, pulls him up, saving him, and the man, if he wants to be saved, must hold on tightly to the rope; explaining both, that salvation is a gift from God and man cannot save himself, and that man, must co-work (syn-ergo), with God, in the process of salvation.

Dostoevsky, (an Eastern Orthodox Christian), the novelist, suggested many arguments for and against free-will. Famous arguments are the Grand Inquisitor, Notes from Underground and the argument, that suicide, if chosen out of the irrational, was validation of free-will.. As for the argument presented in, *The Brothers Karamazov's* section, “The Rebellion,” that the suffering of innocents was not worth the price of free-will, Dostoevsky appears to propose the idea of Apocatastasis, as one possible rational solution.

#### In the LDS (Mormon) Church

Mormons or Latter-day Saints, believe that God has given all humans the gift of moral agency. Moral agency includes free-will and agency. Proper exercise of unfettered choice leads to the ultimate goal of returning to God's presence. Having the choice to do right or wrong was important, because God wants a society of a certain type -- those that comply with eternal laws. Before this Earth was Created, this dispute over agency, rose to the level, that there was a “war in Heaven.” Lucifer, (who favored no agency) and his followers, were cast out of heaven for rebelling against God's will. Many Mormon leaders have also taught, that the battle in Heaven over agency, is now being carried out on Earth, where dictators, influenced by Satan, fight against freedom (or free agency) in governments, contrary to the will of God.

Mormons, also believe, in a limited form of foreordination; not in deterministic

unalterable decrees, but rather, callings from God, for individuals to perform specific missions in mortality. Those who are foreordained, can reject the foreordination, either outright or by transgressing the Laws of God and becoming unworthy, to fulfill the call.

### **In Swedenborgianism**

The New Church, or Swedenborgianism, teaches that every person has complete freedom to choose Heaven or Hell. Emanuel Swedenborg, upon whose writings the New Church is founded, argued that if God is love itself, people must have free-will. If God is love itself, then He desires no harm to come to anyone: and so it is impossible, that He would predestine anyone to Hell. On the other hand, if God is love itself, then He must love things outside of Himself; and if people do not have the freedom to choose evil, they are simply extensions of God, and He cannot love them, as something outside of Himself. In addition, Swedenborg argues, that if a person does not have free-will to choose goodness and faith, then all of the commandments in the Bible to love God and the neighbor, are worthless, since no one can choose to do them - and it is impossible, that a God who is love itself and wisdom itself, would give impossible commandments.

### **Other Views**

Free-will, is also a point of debate, among both sides of the Christian communist theory. Because some Christians interpret the Bible, as advocating that the ideal form of society is communism, opponents of this theory maintain, that the establishment of a large-scale communist system, would infringe upon the free-will of individuals, by denying them the freedom to make certain decisions for themselves. Christian communists, adamantly people, oppose this by arguing, that free-will has and always will be limited, to some extent, by human laws.

Even Jehovah's Witnesses believe in free-will.

## In Jewish Thought

The belief in free-will is axiomatic, in Jewish thought, and is closely linked with the concept of reward and punishment, based on the Torah itself: “I [God] have set before you, life and death, blessing and curse: therefore, choose life” (Deuteronomy 30:19).

Free-will, is therefore, discussed at length, in Jewish philosophy, firstly, as regards to God’s purpose in Creation, and secondly, as regards the closely related, resultant, paradox. The topic, is also often discussed, in connection with Negative Theology, Divine Simplicity, and Divine Providence, as well as Jewish principles of faith, in general.

## Free-will and Creation

The traditional teaching, regarding the purpose of Creation, particularly as influenced by Jewish mysticism, is that “This world is like a corridor to the World to Come” (*Pirkei Avoth* 4:16). “Man was Created for the sole purpose of rejoicing in God, and deriving pleasure from the splendor of His Presence... The place where this joy may truly be derived, is the World to Come, which was expressly Created, to provide for it; but the path to the object of our desires, is this World...” (Moshe Chaim Luzzatto, *Mesillat Yesharim*, Ch. 1). Free-will, is thus required, by God’s justice, “otherwise, Man would not be given or denied good for actions over which he had no control.”

It is further understood, that in order for Man to have true free choice, he must not only have inner free-will, but also, an environment in which a choice between obedience and disobedience exists. God, thus Created the World, such that both good and evil can operate freely; this is the meaning of the Rabbinic maxim, “All is in the hands of Heaven, except the fear of Heaven” (Talmud, *Berachot* 33b).

## The Paradox of Free-will

In Rabbinic literature, there is much discussion, as to the apparent contradiction

between God's omniscience and free-will. The representative view, is that "Everything is foreseen; yet, free-will is given" (Rabbi Akiva, *Pirkei Avoth* 3:15). Based on this understanding, the problem is formally described, as a paradox, beyond our understanding.

" The Holy One, Blessed Be He, knows everything that will happen before it has happened. So, does He know whether a particular person will be righteous or wicked, or not? If He does know, then it will be impossible for that person, not to be righteous. If He knows that He will be righteous, but that it is possible for Him to be wicked, then He does not know everything that He has Created. ...The Holy One, Blessed Be He, does not have any temperaments and is outside such realms, unlike people, whose selves and temperaments are two separate things. God and His temperaments are One, and God's existence is beyond the comprehension of Man... [Thus], we do not have the capabilities to comprehend how the Holy One, Blessed Be He, knows all Creations and events. [Nevertheless], know without doubt, that people do what they want, without the Holy One, Blessed Be He, forcing or decreeing upon them to do so... It has been said, because of this, that a man is judged, according to all his actions. (Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Teshuva* 5.5)."

The paradox is explained, but not resolved, by observing, that God exists outside of time, and therefore, His knowledge of the future, is exactly the same as His knowledge of the past, and present. Just as His knowledge of the past does not interfere with man's free-will, neither does His knowledge of the future. This distinction, between foreknowledge and predestination, is in fact, discussed by Maimonides' critic, Abraham ibn Daud.

(One analogy here, is that of, time travel. The time traveller, having returned from the future, knows in advance, what x will do, but while he knows what x will do, that knowledge does not cause x to do so: x had free-will, even while the time traveller had

foreknowledge. However, one objection raised against this analogy - and ibn Daud's distinction - is that, if x truly has free-will, he may choose to act otherwise, when the event in question, comes to pass, and therefore, the time traveller (or God) merely has knowledge of a *possible* event: even having seen the event, there is no way to know, with certainty, what x will do. Further, the presence of the time traveler, may have had some chaotic effect on x's circumstances and choice, absent when the event comes to pass, in the present).

### Alternate Approaches

Although the above discussion of the paradox represents the majority Rabbinic view, there are several major thinkers, who resolve the issue by explicitly *excluding* human action, from divine foreknowledge.

Both, Saadia Gaon and Judah ha-Levi, hold that "the decisions of man precede God's knowledge." Gersonides holds, that God knows, beforehand, the choices open to each individual, but does not know which choice the individual, in his freedom, will make. Isaiah Horowitz, takes the view, that God cannot know which moral choices people will make, but that, nevertheless, this does not impair His perfection.

In line with this thinking, the teaching from *Pirkei Avoth* above, is read as: "Everything is *observed* (while - and no matter where - it happens), *and* (since the actor is unaware of being observed), free-will is given."

### **In Kabbalistic Thought**

The existence of free-will, and the paradox above (as addressed by either approach), is closely linked to the concept of *Tzimtzum*. *Tzimtzum* entails the idea that God "constricted" His infinite essence, to allow for the existence of a "conceptual space" in which a finite, independent world could exist. This "constriction" made free-will possible, and hence, the potential to earn the World to Come.

Further, according to the first approach, it is understood, that the Free-will Omniscience paradox provides a temporal parallel to the paradox inherent within *Tzimtzum*. In granting free-will, God has somehow, “constricted” His foreknowledge, to allow for Man’s independent action; He thus, has foreknowledge, and yet, free-will exists. In the case of *Tzimtzum*, God has “constricted” His essence to allow for Man’s independent existence; He is thus, immanent, and yet, transcendent.

### **In Islamic Thought**

Disputes about free-will, in Islam, began with the Kharijite vs. Murji’ite disputes, with the Kharijites arguing, that humans had “qadar,” the capacity to do right or wrong, and thus, deserved the reward or punishment they received, whereas, Murji’ites insisted on God’s “jabr,” or total power and initiative in managing all events. Later, thinkers such as Abu Hanifa and al-Ash’ari, searched for ways to explain how both, human qadar and divine jabr, could be asserted at the same time. Ash’ari develops a “dual agency” or “acquisition” account of free-will, in which, every human action has two distinct agents. God creates the act with His divine jabr, but then the human “acquires” the act, making it theirs and taking responsibility for it using their human qadar.

### **In Hinduism**

As Hinduism is primarily a conglomerate of different religious traditions, there is no one accepted view, on the concept of free-will. Within the predominant schools of Hindu philosophy, there are two main opinions. The Advaita (monistic) schools, generally believe in a fate-based approach, and the Dvaita (dualistic) schools, are proponents for the theory of free-will. The different schools’ understandings are based upon their conceptions of the nature of the supreme Being, and how the individual soul (atma or jiva) dictates, or is dictated, by karma within the illusory existence of maya.

In both Dvaita and Advaita schools, and also in the many other traditions within

Hinduism, there is a strong belief in destiny and that both, the past and future are known, or viewable, by certain saints or mystics, as well as by the Supreme Being (Ishvara) in traditions, where Ishvara is worshipped as an *all-knowing being*. In the Bhagavad Gita, the avatar, Krishna says to Arjuna:

- *I know everything that has happened in the past, all that is happening in the present, and all things that are yet to come.*

However, this belief in destiny, is not necessarily believed to rule out the existence of free-will, as in some cases, both free-will and destiny, are believed to exist simultaneously.

### **Different Approaches**

The six Orthodox (astika) schools of thought, in Hindu philosophy, give differing opinions: In the Samkhya, for instance, matter is without any freedom, and soul lacks any ability to control the unfolding of matter. The only real freedom (*kaivalya*) consists in realizing the ultimate separateness of matter and self. For the Yoga school, only Ishvara is truly free, and its freedom is also distinct from all feelings, thoughts, actions, or wills, and is thus, not at all a freedom of will. The metaphysics of the Nyaya and Vaisheshika schools strongly suggest, a belief in determinism, but do not seem to make explicit claims about determinism or free-will.

A quotation from Swami Vivekananda, a Vedantist, offers a good example of the worry about free-will, in the Hindu tradition.

Therefore, we see, at once, that there cannot be any such thing, as free-will; the very words are a contradiction, because will is what we know, and everything that we know, is within our universe, and everything within our universe, is moulded by conditions of time, space, and causality. ...To

acquire freedom, we have to get beyond the limitations of this universe; it cannot be found here.

However, Vivekananda's above quote, can't be taken as a literal refutation, of all free-will, as Vivekananda's teacher, Ramakrishna Paramahansa used, to teach that man is like a goat tied to a stake - the karmic debts and human nature bind him and the amount of free-will he has, is analogous to the amount of freedom the rope allows; as one progresses Spiritually, the rope becomes longer.

On the other hand, Mimamsa, Vedanta, and the more theistic versions of Hinduism, such as Shaivism and Vaishnavism, have often emphasized the importance of free-will. For example, in the Bhagavad Gita, the living beings (jivas) are described, as being of a *higher nature*, who have the freedom to exploit the inferior material nature (prakrti):

Besides these, O mighty-armed Arjuna, there is another, superior energy of Mine, which comprises the living entities, who are exploiting the resources of this material, inferior nature.

The doctrine of Karma, in Hinduism, requires both, that we pay for our actions in the past, and that our actions, in the present, be free enough, to allow us to deserve the future reward or punishment that we will receive, for our present actions. The Advaitin philosopher, Chandrashekhara Bharati Swaminah, puts it this way:

Fate, is past Karma, free-will, is present Karma. Both, are really one, that is, Karma, though they may differ in the matter of time. There can be no conflict, when they are really one. Fate, as I told you, is the resultant of the past exercise of your free-will. By exercising your free-will, in the past, you brought on the resultant fate. By exercising your free-will, in the present, I want you to wipe out your past record, if it hurts you, or to add to it, if you find it enjoyable. In any case, whether for acquiring more happiness or for reducing misery, you have to exercise your free-will, in the present.

## An Important Source of Confusion

One source of confusion, in discussions of free-will, is that between discussions thereof, as a Spiritual faculty, on the one hand and discussions of free-will, as a name for a random element in human behavior.

Freedom-as-chance, a position advocated by William James, among others, can be understood quite naturalistically. The word, "chance," he wrote, "with its singular negativity, is just the word for this purpose" -- the purpose of moving debate beyond competing grabs, for the eulogistic word, "free."

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## **Predestination (Calvinism)**

The **Calvinistic doctrine of predestination** is a doctrine of Calvinism, which deals with the question of the control God exercises over the world. In the words of the Westminster Confession of Faith, God "freely and unchangeably, ordained whatsoever comes to pass." The second use of the word, "predestination" applies this to the salvation, and refers to the belief, that God appointed the eternal destiny of some, to salvation by grace, while leaving the remainder, to receive eternal damnation for all their sins, even their original sin. The former is called, "unconditional election," and the latter, "reprobation." In Calvinism, men must be predestined, and effectually called (regenerated/born again) unto faith, by God, before they will even wish to believe or wish to be justified.

## **Confessional Statements**

On predestination, the Belgic Confession of Faith (1561) states:

We believe that all the posterity of Adam, being thus fallen into perdition and ruin by the sin of our first parents, God then did manifest Himself, such as He is; that is to say, merciful and just: *Merciful*, since He delivers and preserves from this perdition, all whom He, in His eternal and unchangeable council, of mere goodness hath elected in Christ Jesus our Lord, without respect to their works: *Just*, in leaving others in the fall and perdition, wherein they have involved themselves. (Art, XVI).

The Westminster Confession of Faith (1643) says:

God, from all eternity, did by the most wise and Holy Counsel of His own will, freely and unchangeably, ordain whatsoever comes to pass; yet, so as thereby neither is God the author of sin; nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures, nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established.

By the decree of God, for the manifestation of His Glory, some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life, and others foreordained to everlasting death.

As God hath appointed the elect unto glory, so hath He, by the eternal and most free purpose of His will, foreordained all the means, thereunto. Wherefore, they who are elected . . . are effectually called unto faith, in Christ, by His Spirit, working in due season, are justified, adopted, sanctified, and kept by His power, through faith, unto salvation. Neither are any other redeemed by Christ, effectually called, justified, adopted, sanctified, and saved, but the elect only.

The rest of mankind, God was pleased, according to the unsearchable counsel of His own will, whereby He extendeth or withholdeth mercy, as He pleaseth, for the glory of His Sovereign power over His creatures, to pass by; and to ordain

them, to dishonor and wrath for their sin, to the praise of His glorious justice. (Chap.III -- Articles I, III, VI, and VII).

## **Double Predestination**

Calvinistic predestination is sometimes referred to as, “double predestination.” This is the view that God chose, who would go to Heaven, and who to Hell, and that His decision is infallibly to come to pass. This point of view, simultaneously denies, that God is the Author of Evil, but the issue is a very difficult point of the doctrine of predestination. The difference between elect and reprobate, is not in themselves, all being equally unworthy, but in God’s sovereign decision, to show mercy to some, to save some, and not others. It is called double predestination, because it holds, that God chose both, whom to save and whom to damn, as opposed to single predestination, which contends, that though He chose whom to save, He did not choose whom to damn.

## **Reprobation: Active Decree, Passive Foreordination**

Reformed Calvinists emphasize the *active* nature of God’s decree, to choose those foreordained, to eternal wrath, yet, at the same time, the *passive* nature of that foreordination.

This is possible, because most Reformed Calvinists hold to a Infralapsarianism view of God’s decree. In that view, God, before Creation, in His mind, first decreed, that the Fall would take place, before decreeing election and reprobation. So, God actively chooses whom to condemn, but because He knows they will have a sinful nature, the way He foreordains them, is to simply let them be (He doesn’t need to do anything) - this is sometimes called, “preterition.” Therefore, this foreordination to wrath, is passive in nature (unlike God’s active predestination of His elect, where He needs to overcome their sinful nature).

## **Equal Ultimacy**

The WCF uses different words for the act of God's election and reprobation: "predestinated" and "foreordained," respectively. This suggests that the two do not operate in the same way. The term, "equal ultimacy," is sometimes used of the view that the two decrees are symmetrical: God works equally to keep the elect in Heaven and the reprobate out of Heaven. R. C. Sproul argues against this position, on the basis, that it implies God, "actively intervenes to work sin," in the lives of the reprobate. This view, is sometimes erroneously referred to as, "double predestination," on which, see above.

## **Criticisms**

### **From a Universalist Perspective**

Historically, Christian Universalist thinkers and others have criticized Calvinist predestination, on the grounds that it reduces the great majesty and sovereignty of God. Such opponents believe that an omniscient, omnipotent, and all-loving Creator would not fail to save all of humanity.

Universalists argue, that God would be motivated by His love for His Creation, to save all souls from eternal damnation. They posit, that there is no Hell, Satan, or sin that lies beyond the redeeming power of God's love and the sacrifice of Jesus. Continuing this line of reasoning, Universalists argue that, having purposed to save everyone, God, as the omnipotent Creator, shall certainly succeed. Hosea Ballou wrote, that a God who did not want to, or was unable to save everyone, was not a God worth worshipping.

Also, to note, as C. S. Lewis would point out in his book, *Mere Christianity*, a God who does not love everyone, would be a God, who is not all good. If He was not all good, then He could not follow the Moral Law, that He made and is inert in all mankind, which C. S. Lewis believes, proves the existence of a God.

Calvinists agree, that God is sovereign, and will save all those whom He has purposed to save, and damn those He has purposed to damn. Calvinist theologians, however, along with the majority of Christian theologians, from other traditions, believe that Scripture, clearly indicates, that not all will, in fact, be saved. They point to another characteristic of a sovereign God: His divine justice. Calvinists contend, that God extends mercy and grace to whom He will, according to His plan (Romans 8), and administers justice (which, by its very nature, is the punishment for sin, and thus, in every way, good and Holy in concordance with the character of God) to all others.

### **From a Wesleyan/Arminian Perspective**

Arminianism is the theological stance of Jacob Arminius and the movement, which stemmed from him. It claims, to view Christian doctrine, much as the pre-Augustinian fathers did, and as did the later John Wesley. In several basic ways, it differs from the Augustinian-Lutheran-Calvinist tradition.

This form of Protestantism arose in the United Netherlands, shortly after the “alteration” from Roman Catholicism, had occurred in that country. It stresses Scripture alone, as the highest authority, for doctrines. And it teaches, that justification is by grace alone, there being no merit in our faith, that occasions justification, since it is only through prevenient grace, that fallen humanity can exercise that faith.

Arminianism is a distinct kind of Protestant theology for several reasons. One of its distinctions is its teaching on predestination. It teaches predestination, since the Scripture writers do, but it understands that this pre-decision on God’s part, is to save the ones who repent and believe. Thus, its view is called conditional predestination, since the predetermination of the destiny of individuals is based on God’s foreknowledge, of the way in which they will either, freely reject Christ or freely accept Him.

Arminius defended his view, most precisely, in his commentary on Romans 9, Examination of Perkins' Pamphlet, and Declaration of Sentiments. He argued against supralapsarianism, popularized by John Calvin's son-in-law and Arminius's teacher at Geneva, Theodore Beza, and vigorously defended at the University of Leiden by Francis Gomarus, a colleague of Arminius. Their view, was that before the fall, indeed before man's Creation, God had already determined what the eternal destiny of each person was to be. Arminius also believed, that the sublapsarian unconditional predestination view of Augustine and Martin Luther, is unscriptural.

This is the view that Adam's sin was freely chosen, but that, after Adam's fall, the eternal destiny of each person, was determined by the absolutely sovereign God. In his Declaration of Sentiments (1608), Arminius gave twenty arguments against supralapsarianism, which he said (not quite correctly) applied also, to sublapsarianism. These included such arguments, as that the view is void of good news; repugnant to God's wise, just, and good nature, and to man's free nature; "highly dishonorable to Jesus Christ;" "hurtful to the salvation of men;" and that it "inverts the order of the Gospel of Jesus Christ" (which is that we are justified after we believe, not prior to our believing). He said, the arguments all boil down to one, actually: that, unconditional predestination makes God, "the author of sin."

Connected with Arminius's view of conditional predestination, are other significant teachings of "the quite Dutchman." One is his emphasis on human freedom. Here, he was not Pelagian, as some have thought. He believed profoundly in original sin, understanding that the will of natural fallen man, is not only maimed and wounded, but that it is entirely unable, apart from prevenient grace, to do any good thing. Another teaching, is that Christ's atonement, is unlimited, in its benefits. He understood, that such texts as, "He died for all" (2 Cor. 5:15; cf. 2 Cor. 5:14; Titus 2:11; 1 John 2:2), mean what they say, while Puritans such as John Owen and other Calvinists have understood that the "all," means only all of those previously elected, to be saved. A third view, is that while God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance (1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9; Matt. 18:14), saving grace is not

irresistible, as in classical Calvinism. It can be rejected.

In Arminius's view, believers may lose their salvation and be eternally lost. Quoting as support of this position, such passages as 2 Peter 1:10, "Therefore, brethren, be the more zealous to confirm your call and election, for if you do this, you will never fall," Arminians still seek to nourish and encourage believers, so that they might remain in a saved state. While Arminians feel that they have been rather successful in disinclining many Calvinists from such views, as unconditional election, limited atonement, and irresistible grace, they realize that they have not widely succeeded in the area of eternal security. R. T. Shank's *Life in the Son* and H. O. Wiley's 3 - volume *Christian Theology*, make a good Scriptural case against eternal security from within the Arminian tradition, but the position has been unconvincing to Calvinists, generally.

A considerable problem to Arminians, is that they have often been misrepresented. Some scholars have said, that Arminianism is Pelagian, is a form of theological liberalism, and is syncretistic. It is true, that one wing of Arminianism picked up Arminius's stress on human freedom and tolerance, toward differing theologies, becoming latitudinarian and liberal. Indeed, the two denominations, in Holland, that issued from Arminius, are largely such today. But, Arminians who promote Arminius's actual teachings and those of the great Arminian, John Wesley, whose view and movement have sometimes been called, "Arminianism of fire," have disclaimed all those theologically left associations. Such Arminians, largely comprise, the eight million or so Christians, who today, constitute the Christian Holiness Association (the Salvation Army, the Church of the Nazarene, the Wesleyan Church, etc.).

### **From a Roman Catholic Perspective**

The Roman Catholic Church calls predestination, *God's Plan*, and states that this plan also includes free-will for mankind. Catechism of the Catholic Church #600 says:

To God, all moments of time are present in their immediacy. When therefore, He

establishes His eternal plan of 'predestination,' He includes in it, each person's free response to His grace: 'In this city, in fact, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, gathered together against your Holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place.' [Acts 4:27-28; cf. Ps. 2:1-2]. For the sake of accomplishing His plan of salvation, God permitted the acts that flowed from their blindness. (cf. Mt. 26:54; Jn. 18:36; 19:11; Acts 3:17-18).

### **From a Unitarian/Free Thought Perspective**

The logical criticism of predestination, is that it denies the individual their own free-will. Free thinkers and Unitarians tend to ask questions such as: *If God is choosing our path for us, then what choices do we have? Moreover, what do our choices matter?* God demands that we worship Him of our own free-will, but if we're predestined to damnation or salvation, then how could we possibly have free-will at all?

Another criticism is ethical, claiming that the Calvinist view of predestination, inevitably leads into moral nihilism. *If one's actions, deeds, faith or anything initiated by him are worth nil in the eyes of God and if the human being cannot influence his eventual final depository, in any manner by himself, then what is the point of repentance and living, according to God's will? Wouldn't it be far more plausible to just obey your animalistic instincts, lusts, and desires, since the outcome will be the same anyway?* The traditional Calvinist answer, is that God's irresistible grace, will make His elect live in a Godly manner and not vice versa.

Likewise, it cannot be empirically proven, that the ethical or moral standards were any higher in those countries where Calvinism is dominant (Scotland, South Africa, Netherlands, Switzerland), than in the Lutheran countries (Scandinavian countries, Baltic countries, Germany, England), Catholic countries or countries of non-Christian denomination, or that people were more Spiritual or religious or godlier in those countries, in respect to non-Calvinist countries.

## Calvinist Responses to Criticisms

Calvinists deny that their scheme is a form of determinism and instead uphold the free agency and moral responsibility of the individual. They do, however, hold that the will is in bondage to sin, and therefore, unable to actualize its true freedom. Hence, an individual cannot choose to trust God, because his or her will is enslaved to evil, which is antithetical to God, who is good. Since Calvinists further hold that salvation is by grace, apart from good works (*sola gratia*), and since they view making a choice to trust God, as an action or work, they maintain that the act of choosing cannot be the difference between salvation and damnation, as in the Arminian scheme. Rather, God must first free the individual from his or her enslavement to sin, to a greater degree than in Arminianism, and then, the regenerated heart naturally chooses the good. The individual does not cooperate, but is freed and irresistibly follows God.

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## Theological Fatalism

### Argument from Free-will

The **argument from free-will (AFFW)** contends that omniscience and free-will are incompatible, and that any conception of God that incorporates both properties, is therefore, inherently contradictory.

## Formulations

### Moses Maimonides

Moses Maimonides formulated the argument, in the traditional manner, in terms of good and evil actions, as follows:

“... “Does God know or does He not know that a certain individual will be good or bad? If thou sayest, ‘He knows,’ then it necessarily follows that [that] man is compelled to act, as God knew beforehand He would act, otherwise God’s knowledge would be imperfect...”

More generally, the argument can be applied to all freely-willed actions by individuals using reductio ad absurdum:

1. Humans have free-will.
2. By the definition of free-will, this implies that it must have been at least possible, even if highly unlikely, for a human to have made a different choice from the one they made for any given decision.
3. *Assumption:* God is omniscient.
4. By the definition of omniscience, this implies, that God, can perfectly predict (“see into”) the future (except possibly God’s own, but this doesn’t matter for the purposes of this formulation).
5. If God’s omniscient predictions are truly perfect, then it must not be possible for humans to make choices different from those God has already predicted.
6. But, it must be possible for humans to make said, different choices, by point (2).
7. Therefore, the assumption (3) must be false, and an omniscient God cannot exist, if humans have free-will.

## Dan Barker

In modern terms, the argument is formulated typically as follows:

1. The theistic God is defined, as a personal being, who knows everything. Personal beings have free-will.
2. In order to have free-will, you must have more than one option, each of which, is avoidable. This means, that before you make a choice, there must be a state of uncertainty during a period of potential: you cannot know the future. Even if you think you can predict your decision, if you claim to have free-will, you must admit the potential (if not the desire), to change your mind before the decision is final.
3. A being who knows everything can have no “state of uncertainty.” It knows its choices, in advance.
4. A being that knows its choices, in advance, has no potential to avoid its choices, and therefore, lacks free-will.
5. Since a being that lacks free-will is not a personal being, a personal being who knows everything, cannot exist.
6. Therefore, the theistic God, does not exist.

## Criticisms

The principal criticisms of this argument, center around points 1 and 2, though there is some concern, regarding point 4. All point numbers refer to Barker’s formulation.

### Criticism of Point 1

Theists, generally agree, that God is a personal being and that God is omniscient, but there is some disagreement about what, “omniscient” means:

1. “knows everything that God chooses to know, and that is logically possible to

know;” Or instead, the slightly stronger:

2. “knows everything that is logically possible to know.”

If *omniscient* is used in the first sense, then the argument’s applicability depends on what the God, in question, chooses to know, and therefore, it is not a complete argument against the existence of God. In both cases, the argument depends on the assumption, that it is logically possible for God to know every choice that He will make, in advance of making that choice.

### **Criticism of Point 2**

The compatibilist school of thought holds, that free-will is compatible with determinism and fatalism, and therefore, does not accept the assumptions of point 2. A related line of thought, which goes back at least to Boethius, holds that God, observing someone making a choice, does not constrain their choice, although this is in the context of human free-will. The controversy about this, was so well-known in Chaucer’s day, that he has a somewhat satirical digression on it, in *The Nun’s Priest’s Tale*.

### **Criticism of Point 4**

One criticism of the Argument from Free-Will, is that in point 4 of the proof, it simply assumes, that foreknowledge and free-will, are incompatible. It uses circular logic, to “prove” this, by simply stating that, “a being that knows its choices, in advance, has no potential to avoid its choices.” Point 4, is therefore, saying, in essence, “A being that knows its choices, in advance, has no free-will, and therefore, has no free-will.” By assuming what it is trying to prove, that point undermines the entire argument.

Specifically, point 4 commits the modal fallacy of assuming, that because some choice is known to be true, it must be necessarily true (i.e., there is no way it could possibly be false). Logically, the truth value of some proposition cannot be used to infer that the same proposition is necessarily true.

Using logical terminology and applying it to AFFW, there is a marked distinction between the statement, “It is impossible (for God to know a future action to be true, and for that action to not occur)” and the statement, “If God knows that a future action is true, then it is impossible for that action to not occur.” While the two statements may seem to say the same thing, they are not logically equivalent. The second sentence is false, because it commits the modal fallacy of saying, that a certain action is impossible, instead of saying, that the two propositions (God knows a future action to be true, and that action does not occur) are jointly impossible. Simply asserting that God knows a future action, still leaves the possibility for the action not to occur. The confusion comes, in mistaking a semantic relation between two events, for a causal relation between two events.

With these assumptions, more explicitly stated, the proof becomes:

1. Assume that person X has free-will (assumption).
2. By the definition of free-will, at any point in time X can choose to do any action A, where A belongs to  $A(T)$ , the set of all actions that X is physically capable of at time T (definition of free-will).
3. At time T, person X will choose to do action A (i.e., a person cannot logically choose to do both A and not A) (Law of the Excluded Middle).
4. Assume that an omniscient God exists (assumption).
5. By the definition of omniscience, God knows everything that will happen, at any point in time (definition of omniscience).
6. From 3. and 5., God knows that at time T, person X will choose to do action A (logical conclusion).
7. Therefore, person X must do action A at time T.

This claims to prove that at time T, person X is unable to do any action other than A. However, you could also remove steps 4-6, and arrive at the same conclusion. This is called, logical determinism, and it suffers from the same modal fallacy, as AFFW. If a

certain proposition is true, that does not imply that the proposition is logically necessary. Once you remove the invalid assertion, then the argument for logical determinism, is shown to be false. Similarly, when that same invalid assertion is removed from AFFW (“by the definitions of ‘knowledge’ and ‘choice,’ if one knows for certain what choice one will make in the future, one will not be able to make the opposite choice”), the proof is shown to be false.

## Other Answers

### God is Outside of Time

C. S. Lewis argues in the book, *Mere Christianity*, that God is outside of time, and therefore, does not “foresee” events, but simply observe them.

“But suppose God is outside and above the Time-line. In that case, what we call “tomorrow,” is visible to Him in just the same way as what we call today. All the days are “Now” for Him. He does not remember you doing things yesterday, He simply sees you doing them: because, though you have lost yesterday, He has not: He does not “foresee” you doing things tomorrow, He simply sees you doing them: because, though tomorrow is not yet there for you, it is for Him. You never supposed that your actions, at this moment, were any less free, because God knows what you are doing. Well, He knows your tomorrow’s actions in just the same way - because He is already in tomorrow and can simply watch you. In a sense, He does not know your action till you have done it: but then, the moment at which you have done it, is already “Now” for Him.”

## References

^ Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Foreknowledge and Free Will.

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^ *The Freewill Argument for the Nonexistence of God* by Dan Barker Free thought Today, August 1997.

^ Richard Swinburne *Does God Exist?* of *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

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## **Fatalism**

**Fatalism** is a philosophical doctrine, emphasizing the subjugation of all events or actions, to fate or inevitable predetermination.

Fatalism, generally refers, to several of the following ideas:

1. A flawed perception of the consequences of exercised free-will, ignorance, and forgetfulness.
2. That free-will does not exist, meaning therefore, that history has progressed in the only manner possible. This belief is very similar to determinism.
3. That actions are free, but nevertheless, work toward an inevitable end. This belief is very similar to compatibilist predestination.
4. That acceptance is appropriate, rather than resistance against inevitability. This belief is very similar to defeatism.

## **Determinism, Fatalism, and Predestination**

While the terms are often used interchangeably, fatalism, determinism, and predestination are discrete in emphasizing different aspects of the futility of human will or the foreordination of destiny. However, all these doctrines share common ground.

*Determinists*, generally agree, that human actions affect the future, although that future is predetermined. Their view does not accentuate a “submission” to fate, whereas,

*fatalists* stress an acceptance of all events, as inevitable. In other words, determinists believe the future is fixed, because of action and causality, whereas fatalists and many predestinarians think the future is ineluctable, despite causality.

Therefore, in determinism, if the past were different, the present and future would differ also. For fatalists, such a question is negligible, since no other present/future/past could exist, except what exists now.

Fatalism is a broader term than determinism. The presence of history indeterminisms/chances, i.e., events that could not be predicted by sole knowledge of other events, does not exclude fatalism. Necessity, (such as a law of nature) will happen, just as inevitably as a chance - both, can be imagined, as sovereign.

### **The Idle Argument**

One ancient argument for fatalism, called the *idle argument*, went like this:

- If it is fated for you to recover from your illness, then you will recover, whether you call a doctor or not.
- Likewise, if you are fated not to recover, you will not do so, even if you call a doctor.
- It is either fated, that you will recover from your illness, or that you will not recover from your illness.

While the *idle argument* applies fatalism on the effect side (i.e., the recovery from illness), it does not apply fatalism to the cause side. Literalist fatalists apply it to both sides of the cause and effect. While the fact that you will recover or not is left to fate, fatalists believe it is also pre-determined whether or not you will call the doctor.

## The Logical Argument

The logical argument for fatalism, is one that depends not on causation or physical circumstances, but rather argues, based on logical necessity. There are numerous versions of this argument, but the most famous are by Aristotle and Richard Taylor. These have been objected to and elaborated on, but very few people accept them.

The key idea of logical fatalism, is that there is a body of true propositions (statements) about what is going to happen, and these are true, regardless of when they are made. So, for example, if it is true today, that tomorrow there will be a sea battle, then there cannot fail to be a sea battle tomorrow, since otherwise, it would not be true today, that such a battle will take place.

The argument relies heavily on the principle of bivalence, the idea that any proposition, is either, true or false. As a result of this principle, if it is not false that there will be a sea battle, then it is true; there is no in-between. However, rejecting the principle of bivalence - perhaps, by saying that the truth of a proposition about the future, is indeterminate - is a controversial view, since the principle is an accepted part of classical logic.

Another problem with logical fatalism, is that first you must accept there is a timeless set of all propositions, which exist without being proposed by anyone in particular. Constructivists, (a school of thought in logic and maths) would argue, that this is not the case, and that propositions only exist, when they are constructed, or expressed.

### Notes

- ^ Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy
  - ^ Catholic Encyclopedia
  - ^ Fatalism (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy)
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## Providentialism

**Providentialism** is a belief that God's will is evident in all occurrences. It can further be described, as a belief that the power of God (or Providence) is so complete, that humans cannot equal His abilities, or fully understand His plan. Another aspect of Providentialism, is the belief that God's plan is beyond the control of humans, and that sometimes, this may be expressed in seemingly bad things happening to good people. It may further be understood, as a belief that all that occurs, is for the greater good.

Providentialism was frequently featured in discussions in European circles seeking to justify Imperialism in the 19th century, on the grounds, that the suffering caused by European conquest, was justified under the grounds of furthering God's plan and spreading Christianity to distant nations.

## Quiverfull Movement

Providentialism is also a term, sometimes used, to refer to the general philosophy of Quiverfull adherents. Quiverfull is a small movement among conservative evangelical Christians. Advocates oppose the general acceptance among Protestant Christians of deliberately limiting family size through use of birth control. Advocates believe God controls, via Providence, how many children are conceived and born, pointing to Bible verses that describe God acting to "open and close the womb." Continual "openness to children," to conception during routine sexual intercourse, irrespective of timing of the month during the ovulation cycle, is considered by Quiverfull adherents, as part of their Christian calling, in submission to the Lordship of Christ.

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## **Divine Providence**

In theology, **Divine Providence**, or simply **Providence**, is the sovereignty, superintendence, or agency of God over events in people’s lives and throughout history.

### **Etymology**

The word comes from Latin *providentia* “foresight, prudence,” from *pro-* “ahead” + *videre* “to see.” The current meaning of the word (Divine Providence) derives from the sense “knowledge of the future” or omniscience, which is the privilege of God. The initial meaning of *providere* remains in ‘to provide’ = “to take precautionary measures.”

### **Reformed theology**

This term is an integral part of John Calvin’s theological framework, known as Calvinism, which emphasizes the depravity of man and the complete sovereignty of God. God’s plan for the world and every soul that He has created is guided by His will, or providence. According to Calvin, the idea that man has a free-will and is able to make choices independently of what God has already determined, is based on our limited understanding of God’s perfection and the delusion that God’s purposes can be circumvented. In this mode of thought, providence is related to predestination.

The idea of providence, as a central issue of piety, was further developed by many of Calvin’s followers, such as the English Puritans. In modern times, this concept remains

prominent among many Protestant denominations that identify with Calvinism, the Reformed Churches.

## **Lutheran Theology**

In Lutheran theology, Divine Providence refers to God's preservation of Creation, His co-operation with everything that happens, and His guiding of the universe. While God co-operates with both, good and evil deeds, with the evil deeds, He does so only inasmuch as they are deeds, not with the evil in them. God concurs with an act's effect, but He does not cooperate in the corruption of an act or the evil of its effect. Lutherans believe everything exists for the sake of the Christian Church, and that God guides everything for its welfare and growth.

According to Martin Luther, Divine Providence began when God Created the world with everything needed for human life, including both, physical things and natural laws. In Luther's Small Catechism, the explanation of the first article of the Apostle's Creed, declares that everything people have, that is good, is given and preserved by God, either directly or through other people or things. Of the services others provide us through family, government, and work, he writes, "we receive these blessings not from them, but, through them, from God." Since God uses everyone's useful tasks for good, people should look, not down upon some useful vocations, as being less worthy than others. Instead, people should honor others, no matter how lowly, as being the means God uses to work in the world.

## **Catholic theology**

St. Augustine of Hippo, is perhaps most famously associated, with the doctrine of Divine Providence in the Latin West. However, Christian teaching on providence in the high Middle Ages, was most fully developed, by St. Thomas Aquinas, in Summa Theologica. Providence, as care exercised by the Supreme Being, over the universe, His foresight and care for its future, is extensively developed and explained, by Thomas Aquinas and

modern thomists. One of the studies by foremost modern thomist, Dominican father Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange entitled, “Providence, God’s loving care for man and the need for confidence in Almighty God,” (published first in 1932), presents and solves in the light of Catholic doctrine, the most difficult issues as related to providence. In the subsequent generation, Catholic theologians such as, Henri de Lubac and Hans urs von Balthasar developed the doctrine in ways which emphasized its Biblical and Augustinian origins in Catholic thought.

### **Swedenborgian Theology**

*Divine Providence* is also a book, published by Emanuel Swedenborg in 1764, which describes his systematic theology, regarding providence, free-will, theodicy, and other related topics. Both meanings of the word, providence described above (‘foresight’ and ‘to provide’) are applicable in the theology defined in Swedenborg’s writings, in that, providence encompasses understanding, intent, and action. Divine Providence, relative to man, is ‘foresight,’ and relative to the Lord, is ‘providence.’ Swendenborg proposes, that one law of Divine Providence, is that man should act from freedom, according to reason, and that man is regenerated, according to the faculties of rationality and liberty.

### **In Jewish Thought**

Divine providence *Hashgochah Protis / Hashgachah Pratit* lit. [Divine] supervision of the individual is discussed throughout Rabbinic literature, and in particular, by the classical Jewish philosophers. The discussion brings into consideration, the Jewish understanding of nature, and its reciprocal, the miraculous. This analysis, thus underpins, much of Orthodox Judaism’s world view, particularly as regards to questions of interaction with the natural world.

### **Classical Jewish Philosophy**

Divine providence is discussed by all of the major thinkers, but its extent and nature, is

a matter of dispute. There are, broadly, two views, differing largely as to the frequency with which God intervenes in the natural order. The first view admits a frequency of miracles. Here, there is a stability of the natural order, which nevertheless, allows for the interference of God, in the regulation of human events, or even in disturbing the natural order, on occasion. The second, rationalist view, does not deny the occurrence of miracles, but attempts to limit it, and will rationalize the numerous miraculous events, related in the Bible and bring them within the sphere of the natural order.

### **Nachmanides**

The teachings of Nachmanides (“Ramban”) are largely representative of the first view. He holds, that the Creator endowed the universe with physical properties, and sustains the natural order, and that any act of providence involves, by definition, an intrusion into the laws of nature. In the absence of providential interference, cause and effect governs the affairs of the universe. In Ramban’s view, reward and punishment -- as well as guidance of the fate of Israel -- are the typical expressions of such providence. In this sense, there is no difference between God causing it to rain (as a reward) and His separating the waters of the Red Sea. Both are the result of Divine intervention.

“And from the great and well-known miracles, a man comes to admit to hidden miracles, which are the foundation of the whole Torah. A person has no portion in the Torah of Moses, unless he believes that all our matters and circumstances are miracles and they do not follow nature or the general custom of the world. ...rather, if one does mitzvot, he will succeed due to the reward he merits...” (Exodus 13:16 ad loc)

All events (natural or providential) are the result of the direct will of God, and, as such, the seemingly natural order of the world, is an illusion. At the same time, any (obvious) breach, in the chain of causality, involves a “compromise” in the default cause and effect nature of the universe -- providence, is thus, exercised sparingly, and in a “seemingly natural” manner (Genesis 6:19 ad loc). Thus, whereas, the fate of the Jews,

as a nation, is guided by providence, individuals do not enjoy the same providential relationship with the Almighty. Only the righteous and the wicked can expect providential treatment. The fate of more “average” individuals, is primarily guided, by natural law (Deuteronomy 11:13 ad loc).

## **Maimonides**

Maimonides is representative of the rationalist school. He holds, that the pattern of nature, is basically, immutable. “This Universe remains perpetually with the same properties with which the Creator has endowed it...none of these will ever be changed, except by way of miracle, in some individual instances...” (*Guide* 2:29). This notwithstanding, Maimonides believes, that God rewards and punishes, appropriately.

To some extent, Ramban reconciles the two views, by defining providence, as an essentially natural process. Here, individual providence depends on the development of the human mind: that is, the more a man develops his mind, the more he is subject to the providence of God. Providence is, in fact, a function of intellectual and Spiritual activity: it is the activity, not the person, that merits providence. “Divine Providence is connected with Divine intellectual influence, and the same beings which are benefited by the latter, so as to become intellectual, and to comprehend things comprehensible to rational beings, are also under the control of Divine Providence, which examines all their deeds, in order to reward or punish them.” (*Guide* 3:17).

Further, by defining Providence as function of human activity, Maimonides avoids the problem of how God can be affected by events on Earth, lessening any implication of change within God, and the resultant implication of a lack of perfection. Maimonides, relatedly, views “reward and punishment,” as manifesting in the World to Come, as opposed to, in this world (see Talmud, *Kiddushin* 39b; Pirkei Avot 2:16), he therefore, defines Divine providence, as that which facilitates intellectual attainment, as opposed to as an instrument of reward and punishment.

“[The] reward given for fulfilling commandments is life in the World to Come. [So] where it is written that if one listens, one will receive such-and-such, and that if one doesn't listen such-and-such will happen to one...such as plenty, famine, war, peace, monarchy, humility, living in Israel, exile, success, misfortune...[this refers to that] which will aid us in fulfilling the Torah, [and which] will be influenced to come our way, so that we will not have to occupy ourselves all day in obtaining bodily needs, but that we will be free ...*to learn and gather knowledge* and fulfill commandments.” (Mishneh Torah, Teshuva 9:1).

### **Contemporary Orthodox Thought**

From a religious point of view, the extent to which nature is fixed, and to which God intervenes in human affairs, will have very strong implications as to what level, and kind, of interaction with the natural world are appropriate. The question of Divine Providence, thus remains relevant in (Orthodox) Jewish thought. In fact, both of the above approaches continue to influence contemporary Orthodox Judaism. In general, Nachmanides' view is influential in Haredi Judaism, while Maimonides' view - in addition to Nachmanides' - underpins much of Modern Orthodox thought. The difference between the two approaches manifests particularly in the importance assigned to, and attitudes toward, three areas:

- *Derech Eretz*: involvement with the natural world, particularly for purposes of livelihood.
- Technology: the use and manipulation of nature.
- *Madda*: knowledge of the functioning of nature and society, both to facilitate *derech erez* and as a complement to Torah study.

### **Haredi Judaism**

The view of Rabbi Eliyahu Eliezer Dessler is representative of the Haredi approach. To

generalize, Rabbi Dessler, (along with the Chazon Ish) teaches that given the illusory “nature of nature,” each individual must find their appropriate balance between personal effort (*hishtadlus / hishtadlut*) and trust (*bitochon / bitachon*). “Rav Dessler,” relatedly, often repeated the idea that every object and circumstance, in the material world, should be viewed as a means of serving Hashem (God).

- In line with Ramban, Rabbi Dessler defines nature as the arena of “*Nisayon*” [Spiritual] test - i.e., one will engage in *derech erez*, in inverse proportion to his recognition of God’s providential role. Rabbi Dessler thus advises, (based on *Mesillat Yesarim* Ch. 21, that one makes his Torah fixed (*kavua*) and his *derech erez* temporary and contingent on circumstances (*arai*). Note that Rabbi Dessler stresses that “[one cannot] exploit a tendency to laziness in order to bolster his *bitochon* in *Hashem* (“trust in God.”). ...Trust in *Hashem* cannot be built up this way, because the goal here, is not to refrain from work, but to attain certainty in *bitochon* in *Hashem*, that leads to lessening worldly endeavors.” (*Michtav m’ Eliyahu*, vol. 1. pp. 194-5).
- Given this conception of nature, Rav Dessler castigates pre-occupation with technological enterprises, and deems this, the equivalent of idolatry. He writes that a civilization, which is pre-occupied with developing the external and the material, and neglects the inner moral content, will eventually degenerate to its lowest possible depths. “Happiness, in this world, comes only as a result of being content with what one has in this world, and striving intensively, for Spiritually,” and thus, “the more that people try to improve this world, the more their troubles will backlash. ...Instead of realizing they are drowning in materialism, they search for further ways to enhance physicality.” (See *Michtav m’Eliyahu*, vol. 2 p. 236-310 and vol. 3 p. 143-70).
- Rav Dessler writes, that the acquisition of secular knowledge is unlikely to be other than at the expense of Torah knowledge. “The philosophy of Yeshiva education is directed towards one objective alone, to nurture

*Gedolei Torah* (“greats in Torah knowledge”) and *Yirei Shamayim* (those “fearful of Heaven”) in tandem. For this reason, university was prohibited to [yeshiva] students....[educators] could not see how to nurture *Gedolei Torah*, unless they directed all education towards Torah, exclusively” (letter in *Michtav m’Eliyahu* vol. 3).

## Modern Orthodox Judaism

Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik - probably Modern Orthodoxy’s most influential theologian - echoes Maimonides’ teaching. He writes, that “the fundamental of providence is...transformed into a concrete commandment, an obligation, incumbent upon man. Man is obliged to broaden the scope and strengthen the intensity of the individual providence, that watches over him. Everything is dependent on him; it is all in his hands” (*Halakhic Man*, p. 128).

- In line with this emphasis on pro-activity, Modern Orthodox thought regards *derech eretz*, Man’s involvement with the natural world, as a divine imperative inherent in the nature of creation (as opposed to as a “necessary evil,” as above). Here, “worldly involvement” extends to a positive contribution to general society. This understanding is reflected, both in Rav Soloveitchik’s conception, as well as in the teachings of Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch; see *Torah Umadda*, *Torah im Derech Eretz*.
- Similarly, Rabbi Soloveitchik, in *The Lonely Man of Faith*, mandates the involvement of human beings in technological activity. This is based on God’s blessing to Adam and Eve, “Fill the land and conquer it” (Genesis 1:28), which extends to the obligation of *imitatio dei*. The use and development of Technology, then, is not characterized as “prideful,” but rather, is seen as obligatory upon man.
- Further, *Madda*, knowledge of the natural world and society, is regarded as vital in Modern Orthodox thought. This knowledge plays an obvious

role in the facilitation of *derech eretz* and the development of technology. It is also seen as valuable as a complement to Torah study. This further reflects Maimonides, in that, he famously defines science and philosophy, as “Handmaidens” of Torah study - one could not be a learned Jew without this knowledge.

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