

Predestination

Romans 8:29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

Perhaps the most misunderstood doctrine of the Bible and that by the members of the Reformed churches that profess to believe this doctrine. We need a very fine and definite line of distinction between foreordained and predestinated as used in the Bible to begin to understand this doctrine.

First and foremost, predestination has to do with the eternal election to salvation by God in eternity and nothing else. I once said that while God knew what I had for breakfast this morning that God had not predestined that I even eat breakfast this morning. In a room filled with "Reformed" scholars, not one understood where I was coming from much less agreed.

God knows all things and God has foreordained all things that come to pass. In other words God has approved what happens, has even ordered these events to work to His glory and the good of the elect. This however is not an eternal decree and is not set in concrete so to speak. To believe is a final decision (predestinated) is the fatalism the critics of Calvinism point to concerning predestination. However, all things are complete with God, all different paths having been considered as such and the end determined God is not bound by this ordering of events to His glory. Thus, we read in the Bible that because of prayer fifteen years were added to the life of a man.¹ As with the laws of nature God may set them aside at His will to bring about His desired end.²

Predestination however is concerned with a decree of a sovereign and cannot be changed or that sovereign is not worthy of his title. A decree is the official declaration of a sovereign that is normally written and sealed with his sign. Thus, the seal of the Holy Spirit (the mark of God) on believers and the Reformed definition concerning the sacraments being signs and seals. When a sovereign makes such a declaration it cannot be taken back or the sovereign is admitting he made a mistake and had to correct his error. Among the ancients, sovereigns were considered divine personages. To make an error assaulted this concept of deity assigned to a sovereign. This concept is very well illustrated in the book of Esther where an earthly monarch could not simply repeal a decree he had caused to be set to paper under his seal. This being true about earthly monarchs, how much more true must it be with the Sovereign of all things? The immutability of a decree coupled with the ability of God to perform His entire holy will is the comfort of the elect that has sustained the church from the beginning. God is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow. Anything less and the whole Reformed faith rests on smoke and shadows, not the sure word of God.

Prayer works because foreordination or the ordering of all things by God is not a decree and God can and does change it at His will in answer to the prayers of the saints. God knows and God has approved all things that come to be and the will of God cannot be set aside so that from the human perspective the result is the same as predestination. Nonetheless, they are not the same thing! Because we know the whole story and all things work for our good and the glory

¹ Isaiah 38:5 Go, and say to Hezekiah, Thus saith the LORD, the God of David thy father, I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears: behold, I will add unto thy days fifteen years.

² 2 Kings 20:11 And Isaiah the prophet cried unto the LORD: and he brought the shadow ten degrees backward, by which it had gone down in the dial of Ahaz.

of God, we have comfort and peace in this life.³

This fits the doctrine of the Bible and does justice to the teachings of our confessional documents. This will walk in the street so to speak and bring peace and comfort to the believer. To teach that before the foundation of the earth God unchangeably predestined I would have coffee and forego the rest of breakfast this morning is an indefensible position that causes confusion and turmoil among the believers.

The Reformed faith is the Biblical faith and needs no artificial twisting of the words of Scripture to support it. Such efforts to shore up that which needs no prop can only lead to division in the body that is against the perfect will of God for His people.

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³ Romans 8:28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.