

Deuteronomy 7 (NRSV) (Cf. Deut 9)

⁶ For you are a people holy to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on earth to be his people, his treasured possession.⁷ It was not because you were more numerous than any other people that the LORD set his heart on you and chose you—for you were the fewest of all peoples.⁸ It was because the LORD loved you and kept the oath that he swore to your ancestors, that the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

Psalm 24

¹ The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it,
the world, and those who live in it;

² for he has founded it on the seas,
and established it on the rivers.

Psalm 139

¹³ For it was you who formed my inward parts;
you knit me together in my mother's womb.
¹⁴ I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully
made.
Wonderful are your works;
that I know very well.
¹⁵ My frame was not hidden from you,
when I was being made in secret,
intricately woven in the depths of the earth.

¹⁶ Your eyes beheld my unformed substance.
In your book were written
all the days that were formed for me,
when none of them as yet existed.
¹⁷ How weighty to me are your thoughts, O God!
How vast is the sum of them!
¹⁸ I try to count them—they are more than the sand;
I come to the end—I am still with you.

Isaiah 42

⁵ Thus says God, the Lord,
who created the heavens and stretched them out,
who spread out the earth and what comes from it,
who gives breath to the people upon it
and spirit to those who walk in it:
⁶ I am the Lord, I have called you in righteousness,

I have taken you by the hand and kept you;
I have given you as a covenant to the people,
a light to the nations,
⁷ to open the eyes that are blind,
to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon,
from the prison those who sit in darkness.

Isaiah 44

²¹ Remember these things, O Jacob,
and Israel, for you are my servant;
I formed you, you are my servant;
O Israel, you will not be forgotten by me.
²² I have swept away your transgressions like a
cloud,
and your sins like mist;
return to me, for I have redeemed you.
²³ Sing, O heavens, for the Lord has done it;
shout, O depths of the earth;
break forth into singing, O mountains,
O forest, and every tree in it!
For the Lord has redeemed Jacob,
and will be glorified in Israel.
²⁴ Thus says the Lord, your Redeemer,
who formed you in the womb:
I am the Lord, who made all things,
who alone stretched out the heavens,

who by myself spread out the earth;
²⁵ who frustrates the omens of liars,
and makes fools of diviners;
who turns back the wise,
and makes their knowledge foolish;
²⁶ who confirms the word of his servant,
and fulfills the prediction of his messengers;
who says of Jerusalem, "It shall be inhabited,"
and of the cities of Judah, "They shall be rebuilt,
and I will raise up their ruins";
²⁷ who says to the deep, "Be dry—
I will dry up your rivers";
²⁸ who says of Cyrus, "He is my shepherd,
and he shall carry out all my purpose";
and who says of Jerusalem, "It shall be rebuilt,"
and of the temple, "Your foundation shall be
laid."

Romans 8

²⁸ We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose. ²⁹ For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn within a large family. ³⁰ And those whom he predestined he also called; and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified.

³¹ What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us? ³² He who did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us, will he not with him also give us everything else? ³³ Who will bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. ³⁴ Who is to condemn? It is Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us. ³⁵ Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ³⁶ As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep to be slaughtered."

Ephesians 1

³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, ⁴ just as he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him in love. ⁵ He destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will, ⁶ to the praise of his glorious grace that he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. ⁷ In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace ⁸ that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and insight ⁹ he has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ, ¹⁰ as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. ¹¹ In Christ we have also obtained an inheritance, having been destined according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to his counsel and will, ¹² so that we, who were the first to set our hope on Christ, might live for the praise of his glory. ¹³ In him you also, when you had heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and had believed in him, were marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit; ¹⁴ this is the pledge of our inheritance toward redemption as God's own people, to the praise of his glory.

Colossians 1

¹⁵ He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; ¹⁶ for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him. ¹⁷ He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together. ¹⁸ He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. ¹⁹ For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, ²⁰ and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.

1 Peter 1

¹⁸ You know that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your ancestors, not with perishable things like silver or gold, ¹⁹ but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without defect or blemish. ²⁰ He was destined before the foundation of the world, but was revealed at the end of the ages for your sake. ²¹ Through him you have come to trust in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are set on God.

Acts 2

²² "You that are Israelites, listen to what I have to say: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with deeds of power, wonders, and signs that God did through him among you, as you yourselves know— ²³ this man, handed over to you according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of those outside the law. ²⁴ But God raised him up, having freed him from death, because it was impossible for him to be held in its power.

Acts 4

²⁷ For 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, ²⁸ to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place. ²⁹ And now, Lord, look at their threats, and grant to your servants to speak your word with all boldness, ³⁰ while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus." ³¹ When they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God with boldness.

Election / Predestination in the Reformed Tradition

The predestination of God is truly a labyrinth from which the mind of man is wholly incapable of extricating itself. But the curiosity of man is so insistent that the more dangerous it is to inquire into a subject, the more boldly he rushes to do so. Thus when predestination is being discussed, because he cannot keep himself within proper limits, he immediately plunges into the depths of the sea by his impetuosity. What remedy then will there be for the godly? Must they avoid every thought of predestination? Not at all. Since the Holy Spirit has taught us nothing but what it is to our interest to know, this knowledge will undoubtedly be useful to us, provided we shall confine it to the Word of God. Let this, therefore, be our sacred rule, not to seek to know anything about it except what Scripture teaches us. Where the Lord closes His holy mouth, let us also stop our minds from going on further. (Calvin, *Commentary on Romans* 9:14, pp.202-3.)

We call predestination God's eternal decree, by which He compacted with Himself what He willed to become of each person. For all are not created in equal condition; rather, eternal life is foreordained for some, eternal damnation for others" (Calvin, *Institutes* III.xxi.5).

"Furthermore, God, by his eternal counsel, has predetermined, who is saved and who is condemned. But the end, or the decree of life and death is brief, and evident [i.e. clear] to all the pious. The end of predestination or preordination is Christ, the Son of God the Father. For God has decreed to save all, however so many, that have communion with Christ his only begotten Son: but on the other hand to destroy all, however so many, are strangers to the communion with Christ his only Son. Now the faithful truly have fellowship with Christ, and the unfaithful are strangers from Christ." (Heinrich Bullinger, *Sermonum decades quinque*, , p. 279)

"If you have communion with Christ, you are predestined to life and are numbered among the elect: if however you are alien to Christ no matter to what extent you appear to exhibit virtue, you are predestined to death, and foreknown, as they say, to damnation. ... God's predestination is not moved by or affected by either our worthiness or unworthiness, but by the sheer grace and mercy of God the Father, it considers Christ alone. And because our salvation is supported only by this, it is not possible [for it] not to be certain. (Bullinger, *Sermonum decades quinque*, p. 280).

"That same eternal God and Father, who by grace alone chose us in his Son Christ Jesus before the foundation of the world was laid, appointed him to be our head, our brother, our pastor, and the great bishop of our souls. But since the opposition between the justice of God and our sins was such that no flesh by itself could or might have attained unto God, it behooved the Son of God to descend unto us and take himself a body of our body, flesh of our flesh, and bone of our bone, and so become the Mediator between God and man, giving power to as many as believe in him to be the sons of God; as he himself says, "I ascend to my Father and to your Father, to my God and to your God." By this most holy brotherhood whatever we have lost in Adam is restored to us again. Therefore we are not afraid to call God our Father, not so much because he has created us, which we have in common with the reprobate, as because he has given unto us his only Son to be our brother, and given us grace to acknowledge and embrace him as our only Mediator. Further, it behooved the Messiah and Redeemer to be true God and true man, because he was able to undergo the punishment of our transgressions and to present himself in the presence of his Father's judgment, as in our stead, to suffer for our transgression and disobedience, and by death to overcome him that was the author of death. But because the Godhead alone could not suffer death, and neither could manhood overcome death, he joined both together in one person, that the weakness of one should suffer and be subject to death--which we had deserved--and the infinite and invincible power of the other, that is, of the Godhead, should triumph, and purchase for us life, liberty, and perpetual victory. So we confess, and most undoubtedly believe." – (Scots Confession, 1560, §8).

Summary of 17th Century Reformed theological views on Predestination

Two major views; difference concerns the “order of decrees”

Infralapsarianism

Basically the same order as the Bible / History. When God was working out the divine plan in eternity, God thought things through in the very same order in which they occurred in history.

1. Create
2. Permit Fall
3. Elect some, pass over the others
4. Provide salvation for elect
5. Call elect to salvation

Supralapsarianism

This theory begins with the goal that God has. God deliberates about the necessary means to achieve the divine plan and then puts it into action.

1. Elect some, reprobate others
2. Create
3. Permit Fall
4. Provide salvation for elect
5. Call elect to salvation

Some of the problems with these 17th C. Reformed views:

1. In the Infralapsarian view, God seems taken off guard by the Fall (I call this, politely, God’s ‘O poop’ moment).
2. In the Supra lapsarian view, God elects or reprobates individuals before they even exist.
3. Most importantly, in both views Jesus Christ and his work are instrumentalized. The incarnation, work, crucifixion, and resurrection of Jesus become either a backup plan or a mere means for God to save all other human beings. Jesus Christ is thus not an essential part of the being of the Triune God.

None of this seems to jive with the Bible!

A sample of Karl Barth:

“God’s decision, as it has been made once and for all in Jesus Christ, is our life’s predestination... [in a] decree *before* the reality of the cross and resurrection.” (Karl Barth, *Gottes Gnadenwahl* [God’s gracious election], 1936, pp. 17, 19).

“What happened on Calvary for us and upon us and became manifest on the Easter day is our eternal election, although it happened in time.” (Barth, *Gottes Gnadenwahl*, p. 26).

“The doctrine of election is the sum of the Gospel because this is the best thing of all that can be said or heard: God elects man; God is also for man the one who loves in freedom. It is grounded in the knowledge of Jesus Christ because he is both the electing God and elected man in one person. It belongs to the doctrine of God because God, by electing man, not only determines man but in a primordial manner also determines himself. Its function consists in the fundamental testimony to eternal, free, and constant grace as the beginning of all the ways and works of God.” (Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* II/2, p. 1/3).

If by the Son or Word of God one understands concretely *Jesus*, the *Christ*, and thus the true God and the true man, as he existed in the resolution of God from eternity and thus also the pre-existent creation, than one sees that and to what extent it was not only fitting and worthy, but *necessary* for God to be the creator. If it was God’s eternal resolution, in all the freedom of his love, to be the one who in the crib in Bethlehem, who on the Cross of Golgotha and in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathia executes this adopted resolution— than God *could* not only be the creator, then he *must* be the creator. The image of God in this his Son, the Son of Man, the Word in the Flesh, is the proper, real ground of creation, in which he loves the world in this manner (John 3.16): in the surrender of his only-begotten Son he willed to love and from eternity already loved (*CD* III/1, p. 54/51).