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### Predestination - Necessary for Freedom? (Kyle A. Pasewark)

Kyle A. Pasewark

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November 11, 2010

### Predestination - Necessary for Freedom? (Kyle A. Pasewark)



There is hardly a theological doctrine more universally despised or subject to speedier contemptuous dismissal than that of "predestination." It is nothing short of an embarrassment. . . .

It is at least worthy of pause, however, that many of the giants of Western thought, from [Augustine](#) to [Thomas](#) to [Luther](#) and [Calvin](#), were driven to affirm some form of what has come to be called "predestinarianism." Despite their differences on other theological and philosophical issues, partial agreement on this most distasteful assertion remained. . . .

. . . . Does our usual manner of discussing the doctrine of predestination, to the extent we bother really discussing it at all anymore, have anything to do with how its advocates understood it? Moderns believe that predestination is but another word for strict [determinism](#), albeit a divine determinism above one operating merely through finite causes and effects. . . .

This equation between predestinarianism and determinism is one point at which twentieth-century thought should be questioned. Does the classic understanding of predestination fit neatly into debates between determinism and free will or has it been miscast by being placed within the scope of these disputes? Is predestination another name for inscrutable and inevitable external causalities or does that interpretation force our own notions upon the history of thought? And if predestination means something other than deterministic [causality](#), does it mean something valuable for the late twentieth century?

The claim here is twofold—first, predestination need not be principally a claim about divine causality and second, predestinarianism has much to teach us about the conditions and limits of freedom. *Far from being the negation of freedom, some notion of predestination is a condition of meaningful freedom.*

(Kyle A. Pasewark, "[Predestination](#) as a Condition of [Freedom](#)" *Lutheran Quarterly* 12 (1998): 57-58)


## Questions:

- Does predestination limit human freedom? If so, how does predestination limit human freedom?
- Does predestination facilitate human freedom? If so, how does predestination facilitate human freedom?

Posted by [Martin Hanna](#) on November 11, 2010 in [Church History](#), [Historical Theology](#), [Quotable](#) | [Permalink](#)

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