

Predestination

FREE WILL VERSUS DETERMINISM

Concerning Biblical theology, this term refers to God's having predetermined (predestined, preordained) certain future events. Some believe that God has predetermined which individuals will believe the Gospel and be saved (and which will not and be damned). This is referred to as 'Determinism' (also called 'Calvinism,' or, the 'reformed' position). Others believe that God preordained only that believers would go to heaven and let our free will determine our individual outcome. This is referred to as the 'free will' position. In each camp there is some variety concerning specifics of each belief, its implications, etc. This study will acquaint you with the development of these positions.

The Controversy Surrounding Predestination Begins

'Predestination' has been a subject of controversy for centuries. It all began in 390 A.D. when the British monk Pelagius visited Rome and was astounded by the life style of the Romans. He began to speak out against the 'loose living' that he saw. In the process, he initiated a debate which can best be described by the phrase 'predestination verses free will.'

Pelagius' View

More a mystic, moral philosopher than a theologian, Pelagius carried a lot of local credibility wherever he went. You might say that he had no apparent skeletons in his closet and he took personal credit for all of his great achievements in the area of character development. While his fame was not broad at first he did create quite a stir wherever he spoke. His teachings would not become widely known for about 22 years. When they did, they caused a flood of reaction. He taught that:

- All mankind could avoid sin simply by exercising self-control (using himself as an illustration).
- By exercising self-will individuals could, if they truly desired, learn to totally avoid sin and earn the right to go to heaven and that while it was true that God's grace enabled one to resist more effectively, God's gift of grace is actually manifested as mankind's sin-resisting will.
- There was no such thing as original sin, claiming that the only thing Adam handed down to us was a bad example.
- Adam was created mortal.
- Infant baptism served no purpose.
- Predestination meant nothing more than God's foreknowledge of self-deserved merit.

How Jerome fits into the story

In 410 A.D. Pelagius had to evacuate his Roman base following Alaric's capture of Rome. He eventually showed up in Palestine where he aroused the attention of Jerome (scholar and author of the Vulgate). Jerome brought Pelagius up on charges of heresy, but before anything could be done Pelagius left. He surfaced at Diospolis (Lydda) and was again accused of heresy. Despite the efforts of both Jerome (and a leading Augustine disciple named Orosius) Pelagius beat the charges. He did so by claiming that he had mental reservations about his position. This coupled with the lack of agreement between Jerome and Orosius on theological issues enabled him to scoot away again unscathed. It did not last. By now his fame preceded him and he was shortly thereafter condemned as a heretic by Pope Innocent I, Pope Zozimus, Boniface and Celestine. Emperor Honorius even fired 18 bishops who would not condemn Pelagius. Yet, Pelagius did not stop his teaching. He continued, first in Sicily and then in hiding in Asia Minor.

Coelestius

Pelagius' chief disciple, ally, lawyer, and close friend for 22 years (beginning from their arrival in Rome) was named Coelestius. They eventually parted ways and Coelestius settled briefly in Carthage in 412 A.D. Here he applied for ordination in the Roman Catholic Church. Because of his views (i.e., those of Pelagius) he not only was refused, but also was excommunicated from the local assembly. Undaunted, Coelestius moved to Ephesus where he was made an elder!

Smoke turns into fire

Action against Pelagius exposed a serious lack of consensus in the Church concerning 'predestination.' With Pelagius reduced to teaching in obscurity, those who had first united against him began to turn on one another.

Chrysostom, Vincent and Cassian's View

The eastern half of the Roman Catholic Church was represented by John Chrysostom (Bishop of Constantinople), Vincent (a monk from Lerins) and John Cassian of Marseilles (founder of the southern Gaul monasteries around 415). They taught that:

- It was God's will that all men should be saved.
- Mankind could not merit salvation.
- Mankind had a free will that could choose to do good.
- If good was selected, then God's grace was made available to accomplish it, strengthening even the smallest spark of good intention.
- God, however, did not influence the decision by actively cultivated 'correct' decisions. The process was entirely in mankind's hands.
- Once saved mankind could attain perseverance without help from God.

Ambrose's View

The western view of the Church was represented by the teaching of Ambrose of Milan. He taught that:

- Even infants were tainted with ‘original sin’ and thus mankind did not have the ability to do good without first being influenced by God’s grace.
- God had to first take the initiative by influencing individuals in the right direction.
- Mankind’s free will simply either responded to and cooperated with this influence or rejected it.
- The influence of God was not irresistible.

Augustine and Prosper’s View (Determinism)

Shortly after the debate began, Augustine (Bishop of Hippo) and Prosper of Aquitaine got involved—so involved, in fact, that a large part of the remainder of their lives was spent on the subject. They introduced a shared third opinion that eventually came to be known as ‘predestinationism,’ or, ‘determinism.’ This view of salvation and discipleship and was based primarily on Augustine’s own dramatic conversion from sexual depravity to devout Christianity (according to him). They felt that:

- Mankind was NOT born with original sin, but was born with a *tendency* to sin.
- By their understanding, infants who died at birth were lost because they could not choose good (and could not have experienced the second birth). [Say hello to infant baptism.]
- When individuals first freely chose evil (as a result of this tendency toward evil), they become a slave to sin and are then incapable of choosing good.
- Because salvation requires the choosing of good, then believing the gospel can only occur by the supernatural, irresistible influence of God.
- In this way, God predestined the exact number of the ‘elect’ to be saved through grace.
- The elect will still sin, but are granted perseverance.
- The elect will still sin, but will be unable to forsake good.
- When good is accomplished God rewards it as if it was the person’s own work.
- Unfortunately, a person will never know if he is one of the elect. If he did, the knowledge of his position would lead to pride. Those not among the elect would work all their lives in vain because God would simply withhold grace and they would not persevere.

This must be understood within the larger context of Augustine’s theology. He believed that water baptism washed away original sin and all sins committed up to that time. His predestination views were expected to dovetail with his baptism views. For this reason he strongly supported infant baptism.

The Silent Years

Because of the power and influence of the Eastern and Roman Catholic Churches (and later the Church of England) throughout the Dark Ages, the debate faded into the background. Augustinian predestination became the order of the day.

Jacob Arminius (free will)

The debate surfaced again in the late 1500's when Jacob Arminius (Prof. of theology at the Univ. of Leiden) once again championed the power of man's free will. His position was a combination of earlier views:

- The rejection of 'limited atonement' (the belief that Christ died only for the elect)—teaching instead that Christ died for all mankind.
- The rejection of 'irresistible grace.' God does not influence your decision. Rejecters of God's grace are the damned. Although God foresees who will reject His offer, He does not preordain their damnation.
- The rejection of 'perseverance of the Elect.' It is believers only who are saved and that on faith alone.

John Calvin's view (Calvinism)

Calvin is held up as one of a small handful of truly great religious thinkers of all time. However, the majority of his fame can be attributed to his good fortune to have been born into the age of the printing press. He held to the view of determinism and was opposed to 'free will.' The advantage he enjoyed in expressing his views (because of the wide spread distribution of his ideas in print) served to identify him with 'determinism.' Today if someone holds to a this type of predestinationist view he is called a 'Calvinist' rather than an 'Ambrosian' or 'Augustinian.' Because of Calvin's influence on the early Church, predestinationism is still a fundamental belief in most Presbyterian Churches today. [I should qualify that statement by explaining that the last time I visited a Presbyterian adult Bible study class on the topic of predestination it appeared that the teacher was the only person in the room that was comfortable with the Calvinist point of view. When I say, "Presbyterians believe....," I am referring to the official position of the Church infrastructure and not necessarily that of the individual members.]

Presbyterians and Reformed Protestants hold Calvin and his beliefs in this area in high esteem. Following is a summary of the Calvinistic view as written by a pro-Calvinist author.

"God had chosen before the creation of the world to save a number of specific individuals from sin and judgment and to give them eternal life. Those whom he chose did nothing to deserve it; their merits are no better than the rest of humankind who will be judged for their sins. But in his mercy, God decided to save some. Therefore, he chose them and sent Jesus to be their Savior. The Holy Spirit regenerates and brings to faith (through an 'effectual calling') those whom God has elected. God's Spirit effectively persuades each of them to submit to the gospel, so that they become the guaranteed recipients of eternal life. This choice by God to selectively save some may seem unjust. But in fact, God is not obliged to show mercy to anybody; he is free to show mercy as he pleases. People cannot protest that because they were not of the Elect [predestined] they never had a chance of being saved. They never deserved that chance anyway. But anybody who hears the gospel and responds to it with faith can know that he is one of the Elect. Whoever rejects the gospel has only his own sinfulness to blame."

The Determinism vs. Free will Debate Still Goes on Today'

Today the Calvinists stand in the majority. At least they seem to if you are sticking to church denominational membership roles. Calvinists, when asked, will state a pretty solid case for their position. The position is based primarily on what scripture *appears* to say. This position is not accepted by many minority Christians (a majority in areas of strong evangelicalism) on the basis that it appears to be neither logical nor consistent with the rest of scripture. The first problem is that it seems to reduce the human action of trusting in Christ as Savior to a charade. The second problem is that it means that it implies that God created some people for the purpose of going to Hell. Those other Christians (incl., to some extent, the author) believe that in this particular case (as in the other Calvinistic doctrines of church-state marriage and the rejection of the premillennial return of Christ), Calvin was not quite the genius people thought that he was. Calvinists would reject my view [incorrectly, I believe] saying that I was denying God's sovereignty. A careful examination of my view (at the end of the study) will conclude that this is not the case. The debate is as strong as ever. There aren't any novel views today, simply a new mixture of the old views. Thus, the debate has raged around these opinions for over 1600 years now.

What the Bible Says About Predestination

I am going to do my best here to assemble what I feel is the Biblical view of predestination. While I don't agree totally with either camp I lean more in the direction of free will. The following will explain why.

The Greek and Hebrew Words

First let's look at the Biblical word for 'predestination.' It comes from the Greek word προορίζω ('proorizo'—pronounced proor-ID-zo^{Strong's #4309}): It is a compound word; "pro"—meaning 'in front of' (from which we get our English prefix 'pro,' as in 'pronoun') and "horizo"—meaning 'setting of limits' (from which we get our English word 'horizon'). The combination of these two words literally means "pre-established boundaries." This literal definition is very important because the inference is that God has not preestablished *people*, but *conditions*. Thus, when scripture uses the word 'predestine(ate,ated,etc.)' it would seem that this Greek word lends its support to the free will camp. However, the literal translation does not always seem to fit snugly into the verse. Arminianists prefer to stick to the literal translation of the word when expounding the scripture and Calvinists stick to their preferred definition since it generally fits the sentence flow better. All told, this approach does not really favor either side.

Other words also bear on this topic. The words 'elect' ('election,' elected, etc.) or 'choose' (chosen, etc.) are frequently used to refer to the results of 'predestination'. They have corresponding Hebrew and Greek words:

בַּחֵר ('bachiyr'—pronounced baw-KHEER^{#972}) is the Hebrew word that is translated as 'elect.' It means 'select.'

ἐκλεκτός ('eklektos'—pronounced ek-lek-TOS^{#1588}) is the frequently used corresponding Greek word for 'elect.' It also means 'select'

ἐκλέγω ('eklegomai'--pronounced ek-LEG-om-ahee^{#1586}) is a Greek word that is sometimes used. It also means 'select.'

Each time these words are used they are referring to people and not conditions. The Calvinists say, “Amen to that.” The Arminianists say that the reference is to people simply because those same people met the ‘pre-established conditions’ for election (of their own free will). The answer to this debate seems to lie somewhere other than in definitions of the words.

The Related Scriptures

Let’s examine the related scriptures

“Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land: But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it.” [Isa.1:18-20].

Has God foreordained their fate, as Calvin would have you believe? Or, has God limited his power in such matters—preferring, rather, that mankind make a conscious decision to follow Him. This verse supports free will.

“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” [Ma.11:28].

The use of the word “all” allows two possible cases to exist. If you believe Calvin, then you would have to also believe that only those predestined to go to heaven labor in life and are heavy laden. Only the predestined seek rest. The other case would be that God’s provision for salvation is open to *all* who seek it. This verse also supports free will.

“That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.” [Jn.3:15-18].

To believe Calvin is to understand that “whosoever” applies only to those whom God has predetermined will go to heaven. On the contrary, it would seem obvious that the use of the word “world” opens up “whosoever” to include everyone. It also seems clear that vs.18 sets the criteria as belief only. If Calvin is right, then God must actively prevent all ‘non-predestined’ from believing, but that would stand in direct violation to the use of the words “whosoever” and “world.” Again, support for the free will position.

“The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” [2Pet.3:9].

Since ‘repentance’ (see REPENTANCE) means ‘change of mind’ and is a requirement for salvation (change of mind with respect to the Gospel of grace), then this verse is not written concerning those who are already saved, but to those who are not saved. Why has God not yet returned? Could it be that He is patiently waiting on more people to be saved? The use of the words “any” and “all” make it clear that the opportunity for salvation is not limited to a select few. It is said that God is long suffering. If God has already chosen who will be saved, then there hardly seems any reason to ‘suffer.’ That would mean that God was suffering as the result of His own choice in who were the Elect. Again, support for the free will position.

“And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.” [1Jn.2:2]

If Calvin was correct, then Christ’s death on the cross was a payment for the sins of the select few who were foreordained to go to heaven. This verse would mean that Christ suffered needlessly for the sins of those God had no intention of saving. Of course, if Calvin is wrong, then salvation is open to all. The phrase “whole world” clearly shows this to be the case. A pro-‘free will’ verse.

“I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live.” [Deut. 30:19].

These words were spoken by God to Moses who was directed to pass them on to the Israelites. Does this sound like a God who has predetermined who will follow Him, as Calvinism teaches? Does it reveal that God has left the final decision up to the individual? It would seem clear that either God has ORDAINED ‘free will’ decisions as part of his plan for humanity, or, is simply toying with us. Another pro-‘free will’ verse.

What About Pro-‘Determinism’ Verses’?

The following verses will include interpretations on the right hand side to explain their context (in my view).

<i>And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God,</i>	>	‘agape’ love = disciples => them that love God are disciples.
<i>...</i>		
<i>to them who are the called according to his purpose. ...</i>	>	‘called’ = believing disciples
<i>For whom he did foreknow ...</i>	>	God knew ahead of time who would believe the gospel.
<i>he also did predestinate to be ...</i>	>	predetermined that those who believe would be.
<i>conformed to the image of his Son, ... that he ...</i>	>	Jesus
<i>might be the firstborn among many brethren.</i>		
<i>Moreover whom ...</i>	>	Believers

- he did predestinate, . . .* > Determine would go to heaven based on their belief.
- them he also called: . . .* > To be disciples.
- and whom he called, . . .* > To be disciples.
- them he also justified: . . .* > When they believed.
- and whom he justified, them he also glorified.* > But not yet revealed the glory (see vs.18).

[Rom.8:28-30].

By reading the verse, it would appear that it supports a determinist point of view. However, in light of the free will interpretation of the verse it would seem to support either view. Your decision is to determine if the free will interpretation of the verse is an honest one or is forced. If it is forced, then throw it out and stick to your Calvinist guns, but be prepared to explain away the pro-‘free will’ verses when asked, because you are supporting a contradiction of scripture.

- According as he . . .* > God.
- hath chosen us . . .* > Those who have believed.
- in him . . .* > In Christ.
- before the foundation of the world, . . .*
- that we . . .* > Those who would believe.
- should be holy and without blame before him in love:* > Set ourselves apart as examples of godly living in our area of service.
- Having predestinated us . . .* > Those who would believe.
- unto . . .* > Unto = εἰς = concerning.
- the adoption of children by . . .* > Through.
- Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will. . .*
- In whom also we . . .* > Who have believed.
- have obtained an inheritance, . . .* > As the children of God.
- being predestinated . . .* > Because of our belief.
- according to the purpose of him . . .* > Him = God.
- who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will:* > Only God knows why he demonstrated self-limitation in the exercise of His sovereignty.

[Eph.1:4-5,11]

A father drives by a Baskin-Robins ice cream store with his children in the car. Because of his love for them (and despite their behavior), he asks if they would each like an ice cream cone. He could have decided for them (yes or no for each child). He certainly has that authority. Yet, regardless of the father’s sovereignty in the issue, he has elected to allow the children’s will to determine the outcome of his offer of grace. He has ‘pre-determined’ to buy ice cream for those who choose to accept his gift. Is God’s grace irre-

sistible, or has He, perhaps because of His great love, simply allowed us to make the decision?

Where . . .

> In the body of believers.

there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all. Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; Forebearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.

> Perfectness = maturity.

And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are . . . called in one body'; and be ye thankful.

> Present perfect tense 'are being.'

> Directed as a group.

[Col.3:11-15]

The 'calling' referred to here is to unity as believers rather than a call to salvation. In any case, if the calling to unity were predetermined to occur, then there would be little reason to expound on the need (it would happen anyway). God conforms us to His image. God gives the increase. Yet, we must participate in that maturing process by willingly submitting to God's will. That willing submission requires that we know what God's will is. Thus, we are told of God's will in this area so that we can choose to submit.

"Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father,...To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you."

> Not foreordination

[1Pe.1:2a,4].

Foreknowledge is not the same as predestination. The father in the ice cream example given earlier may have been able to accurately predict his children's choice [Who couldn't?], but he did not make the choice. God certainly knows who will believe the Gospel message and who will reject it, but that does not mean that He made the choice.

"Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and

> Brethren = fellow believers

election sure: > 'Sure' to others
for if you do these things, ye shall never fall:" > 'Fall' => Out of fellowship

[2Pe.1:10].

I am sure that there are some people who would love to turn this into a 'works-for-salvation' verse. The problem is that it is addressed to fellow believers. Since everlasting life is everlasting, then the 'fall' cannot refer to a loss of salvation. It would seem clear that in this case the 'calling and election' is not in reference to the issue of strict predestinationism.

Scripture Summary

Our 'election' is not to salvation. That was based on our free will choice to believe the Gospel. Our 'election' is to a home in heaven. God preordained that all who would believe the Gospel would be guaranteed a home in heaven. True, God had the foreknowledge of who would place their trust in Him, but foreknowledge is not the same as preordained.

The preceding verses should be sufficient to show that Calvin's view of predestination is, in large part, incorrect. It does not, however, show that Arminianism's 'free will' view is correct. You may recall that the Arminian's position was that God played no part in the mankind's choice. There is a logical flaw with this position. We begin with the assumption that God does not influence mankind's decision. A 'decision' presupposes that the choices are known. Knowledge of God is accomplished supernaturally [1Co.2:17]. How does one become aware of God without God's influence (either directly through witness, or indirectly through creation)? We conclude with the fact that all knowledge of God originates with God and, therefore, God must play a role in one's decision. The only question is how much of a role. The truth seems to lie somewhere between these two positions.

What Does All of This Mean to You?

The questions listed here are crucial to the understanding of what is at stake. Your view should be based on what you understand scripture to say about these questions.

1. If mankind earns the right to go to heaven through self-control, then what was gained by Christ dying on the cross? Does the cross still speak of redemption? Is atonement for one's sins even needed? Did Christ perform any function other than being a good example (as opposed to Adam's bad example)?
2. Is it fair to provide salvation to only a portion of mankind while condemning the rest? Did Christ die for only the portion of mankind that was to be saved? If Christ died for all of mankind, then did he suffer needlessly since God intended only to save a portion?
3. Would a loving God condemn infants (and the mentally deficient) who had not experienced the second birth? What happens to infants who die without having made a 'decision'? Is one born *with* sin, *or* with a nature that *leads* to sin?

[I sometimes here people address the weakness in their theology in this area by saying, “We just have to depend on God’s grace to deal with the infant problem.” That’s the same as saying, “My understanding of the most fundamental doctrine of the Bible (salvation) is so weak that I must admit there is no scriptural basis for supporting it, but rather than deal with my misunderstanding of Scripture, I will simply plug the holes with ‘God is a mystery.’”]

4. If sin is inherited through conception, then wouldn’t that condemn Christian marriage as a means of propagating sin?
5. Is it God’s wish that all of mankind be saved?
6. To what extent does God influence one’s salvation? To what extent does God influence the disciple’s life?
7. Can a person know that he is saved? How?
8. Does response to the Gospel require a decision? Who makes that decision?

My Understanding of Scripture

My ‘middle-of-the-road’ view may be summed up as follows:

- You are born with a sinful nature inherited from Adam. This nature is *not* inherited sin, but is an inherited infrastructure that leads one to sin. [See SIN]
- God holds that sin to your account that you commit willingly, rather than out of ignorance of God’s will. Otherwise, no one would ever be in fellowship with God. Thus, infants who die go to heaven because they have never knowingly/willingly committed a sin against God.
- Once you willingly commit a sin, your fellowship with God is broken and you are in danger of damnation. However, our loving God sends His Holy Spirit to influence you into confronting the Gospel. God does not predetermine your answer to the Gospel. He knows your answer ahead of time, but the decision between heaven and Hell is yours to make. After all, the decision to reject the Gospel is one that the *lost* are held accountable to—not God.
- God continues to influence your life as a believer. He does all the work. Your reward in heaven is not based on your ‘work,’ but on your motive. It is not based on the results, but on your willingness to place yourself at God’s disposal. It is God who *always* gives the increase.
- I believe in the total sovereignty of God. That means that God has the authority to allow us to decide our fate. To take the position that God must decide our fate places limits on God’s sovereignty. Therefore, the Calvinist position actually argues against the sovereignty of God.

The Debate Turns Secular

The ‘free will’ vs. ‘determinism’ debate has become a well-established logical paradox. It is known as ‘Newcomb’s Paradox’ after William Newcomb, the theoretical physicist who first discovered (?) the paradox in the late 1960’s. Apparently, Newcomb and those that wrestle with the logic of the paradox do not recognize its underpinnings in theology.

It goes like this:

Suppose that a person knows that one of two men is his father. We will call these men ‘A’ and ‘B.’ ‘A’ died of a very painful, inherited disease, while ‘B’ didn’t. The disease is genetically dominant. If ‘A’ is the true father, then the son has inherited the disease. If ‘B’ is the father, then the son is safe because ‘B’ did not have the gene. There is also a well-established link between those that have the gene and their behavior. It seems almost certain that those with the gene tend to be very intelligent. The son is now deciding on his career. He can either be a professional ballplayer or go to graduate school on a scholarship, both of which he seems well qualified to pursue. His decision, however, will likely betray this genetic behavior trait. Which decision is the correct one?

Let’s look at the same paradox from a theological view. We may imagine that God has placed in front of you two closed boxes. You have the option of choosing either box #1 and #2 or box #2 only. Box #1 contains \$1,000 and box #2 contains either \$1,000,000 or nothing. The contents of the second box are determined beforehand by what God believes your decision will be. If God believes that you will choose only the second box, then He will place \$1,000,000 in it. If He believes that you will choose both boxes, then he will place nothing in box #2 (but leave \$1,000 in box #1). The placement of money is made before your decision. Will you choose both boxes or will you choose box #2 only?

For those who believe in free will and the omniscience of God, then the best ‘choice’ is clearly box #2. For the Calvinist there is no ‘choice.’ He must logically conclude that whatever God’s decision the money is either in the box or it is not. Since the money is now fixed as well as his decision, then the best choice is to opt for both boxes. Doing so will guarantee \$1,000 more than choosing the second box alone. What would be your choice? Your decision will go a long way in determining your position on this issue.

For those who don’t believe in God’s omniscience the best choice is both boxes. This is the position of Isaac Asimov (a co-signer of the Humanist Manifesto, and dedicated atheist),

“I would, without hesitation, take both boxes....I am myself a determinist but it is perfectly clear to me that any human being worthy of being considered a human being (including most certainly myself) would prefer free will, if such a thing exists....Now, then, suppose you take both boxes and it turns out (as it almost certainly will) that God has foreseen this and placed nothing in the second box. You will then, at least, have expressed your willingness to gamble on his non-omniscience and on your own free will and will have willingly given up a million dollars for the sake of that willingness—itsself a snap of the finger in the face of the Almighty and a vote, however futile, for free will...And of course, if God has muffed and left a million dollars in the box, then not only will you have that million but ‘far more important’ you will have demonstrated God’s non-omniscience. If you take the second box,

however, you get the damned million and not only are you a slave but you have demonstrated your willingness to be a slave for that million and you are not someone I recognize as human.”

[Scientific American, 3/74, p.104].

Personally, I consider it a joy to be a ‘slave’ to God and would only consider selecting the second box. What about you?