

ARE WE FREE TO MAKE OUR OWN CHOICES IN LIFE?

Jerry D. McDonald

Introductory Matters

The Problem: Stated and Explained: This article is concerned with the idea of whether or not man has the ability to make his own choices in life, or if we are destined to whatever destination that God foresees. Part of the problem, as seen by many, is God's foreknowledge. If God can foresee where I will spend eternity, am I really free to make my own choice about where I will spend eternity? Bible critics have used this objection for years as an excuse to keep from accepting the Bible as God's word. A person known only as Pisan on the internet has made an argument of sorts to explain his position on predestination. His argument is as follows:

"Pi:

Asserting it doesn't make it true.

Now, if there is a truly "free" choice, explain how someone can do something

OTHER than what God ALREADY knows they will do.

Here's the outline of my argument again:

- 1) Truly free will requires that one be able to make a choice between 2 (or more) alternatives.
- 2) God has perfect knowledge of all that is, was, and will be.
- 3) Since God already knows with absolute, perfect certainty what I will do, that is what I MUST do.
- 4) Should I choose otherwise would mean that God's knowledge is not perfect.
- 5) Since I MUST do what God ALREADY knows I will do, I have no freedom in my actions" (<http://us.mc9.mail.yahoo.com/mc/compose?&rand=1752779332&da=0>).

If we take the Bible for what it says, we have to believe that we have the right to make choices. Joshua said "*And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD*" (Jos 24:15). So the problem is does God's foreknowledge nullify our freewill, or do we have freedom to make our own choices in life even though God knows what our choices will be? This paper will be concerned with looking at Pisan's argument to see if it has validity.

Naturally a very important part of this paper is going to include a study of logic. In this study there are some laws that we need to look at:

1. The law of rationality which "says that men should draw only such conclusions as are warranted by the evidence" (*Logic and the Bible*, Thomas B. Warren, p. 14). A real problem in our world is people drawing all kinds of conclusions regardless of the evidence that is available. For example astronomers argue that there are stars that are billions of light years away from here, but we don't have telescopes that can magnify that far. So how do they know that they are billions of light years away? It certainly isn't from the available evidence because the available evidence on the subject doesn't show any such thing.
2. The law of excluded middle is another law which needs to be looked at. This law simply says that any thing either has a certain property or it does not have a certain property, there is no middle ground where it does and does not have that certain property. Either I am a human or I am not a human, the law of excluded middle excludes me being something that is neither human nor non-human.
3. Finally we want to look at the law of contradiction which simply states that between two opposing views one view must negate the other to the point that if one is true the other must be false. You can have two differing false views, these are called "contraries." You can also have two differing true views, these are called "sub contraries." However, if they are truly contradictory then one of them must negate the other to the point that if one is true the other must be false.
4. We also need to look at explicit and implicit teaching. All recognize that explicit teaching is binding on us, but many don't seem to understand that implicit teaching is just as true, factual and binding as explicit teaching. Implicit teaching covers a broad range of the teaching done in both the Old and New Testaments, and it is important that we recognize this point.

Now what about Pisan's argument?

- "1) Truly free will requires that one be able to make a choice between 2 (or more) alternatives.
- 2) God has perfect knowledge of all that is, was, and will be.
- 3) Since God already knows with absolute, perfect certainty what I will do, that is what I MUST do.
- 4) Should I choose otherwise would mean that God's knowledge is not perfect.
- 5) Since I MUST do what God ALREADY knows I will do, I have no freedom in my actions."

It is true that true free will requires that one be able to make a choice between two or more alternatives. It is also true that God has perfect knowledge of all that is, was, and will be. However, as true as the first two premises are the final two premises and conclusion of Pisan's are flawed.

The law of rationality demands that we draw only such conclusions as are drawn by the evidence. The evidence does not show that premise three and four are true, thereby the conclusion of Pisan's argument does not follow from the premises.

Looking at premise number three we can see the flaw in it by showing that since God already knows with absolute, perfect certainty what I will do, that is what I will do, not what I MUST do. The will do places the responsibility on our shoulders and not God's. However, the "must do" places the responsibility on God's shoulders and not ours.

Premise number four is flawed because it is based upon premise number three which is also flawed. Any time a doctrine implies a false doctrine, that doctrine in and of itself is false. Well the same principle goes here, any premise that is based upon a false premise is a premise that is false itself.

Therefore, the conclusion is flawed: "Since I MUST do what God ALREADY know I will do, I have no freedom in my actions." Again, the third premise is flawed because God does not know what I MUST do, but what I WILL do. What I will do is what I have chosen to do, not what has been chosen for me.

A logical and sound argument would be like this.

1. True free will requires that I be able to make a choice between two or more alternatives.
2. God has perfect knowledge of all that is, was, and will be.
3. Since God already knows with absolute, perfect certainty, what I will do, that is what I will do.
4. Though I will do what God already knows what I will do, I am the one who has freedom of my actions.

God's foreknowledge does not have anything to do with our actions in our lives. Now this principle is either true, or it is not true. There is no middle ground here because the middle ground has been excluded. Pisan is a self professed "theistic evolutionist" and he likes to tell people that he became one after having a crisis of faith and his religious mentor taught him to accept science over scripture, but to accept scripture nonetheless. In his eyes, he made a choice. However, given his position here, he made no choice because the choice was made for him. He is a theistic evolutionist because God knew that this was what he would become and that was what he had to become. He was not free to become anything else! This is where false teachings get us, they always get us on the backswing. According to this doctrine, I didn't choose my wife, she was chosen for me before the world

was created because God could look down through the corridors of time and see what I would do. I had no free will in the matter, according to that theory. According to that theory a Christian turned Atheist turned atheist, not because he wanted to, but because God saw that he would and it was something that he HAD to do.

Oh, no, I am sure that Pisan would say that he chose to become a theistic evolutionist; that was his choice. Well the law of contradiction won't allow him to take both positions because they negate each other to the point that if one of them is true, the other is false, and any position that involves self-contradiction is a false position.

Pisan has implicitly taught a principle that will destroy the very fabric of his entire life if he truly believed it. Personally I don't believe that he truly believes it on every point, but only when it comes to salvation. I believe him to be a believer in predestination in as far as salvation is concerned. However, this is the problem with false doctrines, you cannot just teach them about one or two things, they tend to blend in to your entire life.

Joshua told Israel to choose who they would serve if serving the Lord seemed evil in their sight, but as for he and his house, they would serve the Lord. We can choose to serve God, or we can choose to serve Satan. The choice is ours to make. We are the only ones who will be able to make it.

So many people want to blame God for their mistakes. A skeptic once asked me why God couldn't make it to where we could have freedom of choice, but never choose the wrong. Well, Pisan's first premise settled that problem because if one truly has freedom of choice he must have two or more alternatives to choose from. If there is no chance of making the wrong choice then we don't have freedom of choice. We need to stop blaming God for our failures in this life and start taking responsibilities when we do things that are wrong.

Back when people stood up and admitted their mistakes our country, our families and the church were all much stronger. Now everyone wants to blame someone else. We want to blame the person in the White House, or the people in Congress for the way the economy is when the real truth is, we as Americans have been out of control with our spending. We have been eating Porterhouse steaks on hamburger meat salaries. We pay \$1500.00 to \$2000.00 for large screen TV's when we can't afford to put groceries on the table and gas in our vehicles. And who do we blame? Well, yes the government does do its share of spending, but no one makes us spend what we spend. My mother recently got her "stimulus check" and I told her to put it in her savings account and save it. The government wants her to spend it, but she needs to save it. The American people have brought our country to where it is at financially, and while the government had its hand in it, we have to take our share of the blame. We made choices, and made some bad ones. However, they were our choices to make.

Why is the church hurting so? Simply because we have made some very bad choices! We have allowed false teachers to run rampant, unchecked, unmarked and unchallenged. I opened an envelope not long ago from a group that was concerned about a problem “looming over the horizon.” The problem of “instrumental music” in worship. I began reading some of the names, names like Jimmy Allen and Jerry Jones and I threw up my hands in disbelief with the question: Where have these guys been for the last 25 years. There’s no problem looming over the horizon over instrumental music; we are in a fully blown cyclone on the matter. 25 years ago we were trying to warn brethren that there was a problem looming over the horizon, but no one wanted to listen, now we are in a hurricane. We made some bad choices, and we have no one to blame but ourselves. However, rather than continuing to make bad choices and give up, we need to start making good choices and start doing the right things and start fighting the false doctrines that are destroying the church. It is still not too late. We can still win the fight; it is hard, but we can do it if we do as Joshua did and choose to serve Jehovah.

[Back](#)

[Home](#)