

# Divine Control & Human Freedom: Part 2

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## Outline

- # What is Calvinism?
- # Theological determinism
- # Theological fatalism
- # Some criticisms

## Some History

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- # John Calvin (1509-1564): proponent and articulator of a particular theological tradition.
- # Also: Augustine (354-430), Martin Luther (Calvin's contemporary in the Reformation).
- # "Augustinian-Calvinist" view.

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## Distinctives of Calvinism

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- # Divine control is absolute.
- # Divine foreknowledge is a result of absolute divine control.
- # Human freedom is not "libertarian."

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## Calvinism's Comeback

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- # "...in the past two years Calvinism began emerging as an issue everywhere ... this particular doctrine is being promoted far more widely and aggressively now than I was ever aware in the past." [D. Hunt, 2002]

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## TULIP

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- # **T**otal depravity
- # **U**nconditional election
- # **L**imited atonement
- # **I**rresistible grace
- # **P**erseverance of the saints

[[www.mslick.com/tulip.htm](http://www.mslick.com/tulip.htm)]

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## Total Depravity

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- # Desperate condition of fallen sinners apart from God (Eph. 2:1)
- # Human condition: Mark 7:21-23; Jer. 17:19; Rom. 6:20, 3:10-12; 1 Cor. 2:14; Eph. 2:15, 2:3
- # Only by God's will: Jn. 1:12-13; Phil. 1:29; Jn. 6:28-29; Acts 13:48; Eph. 1:1-11; Rom. 8:29, 9:9-23
- # Not much dispute among many Christian traditions.

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## Unconditional Election

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- # In His sovereign grace, God has chosen to rescue certain sinners.
- # Eph. 1:4-8, Rom. 9:11, Rom. 9:15,21
- # Unconditional: independent on God's foreknowledge of person's faith, obedience, etc.

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## Limited Atonement

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- # Christ died only for the elect.
- # Matt. 26:28; Is. 53:12 (“many”, not “all”)
- # John 10:11,15; Matt. 25:32-33; John 17:9; Acts 20:28; Eph. 5:25-27; Acts 13:48.
- # Hard Calvinists also affirm “double predestination.”

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## Irresistible Grace

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- # The elect cannot resist God’s grace.
- # Rom. 9:16; Phil. 2:12-13; John 6:28-29; Acts 13:48; John 1:12-13
- # Calvinists deny that God “forces” Himself on us, and that humans are still free.

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## Perseverance of the Saints

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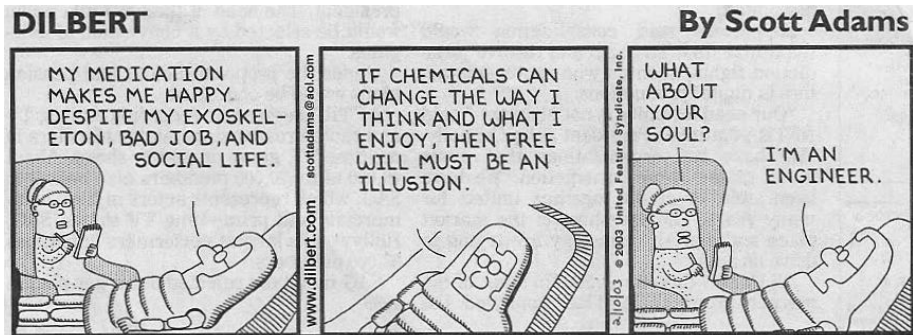
- # The elect are eternally secure.
- # John 10:27-28, 6:47; Rom. 8:1; 1 Cor. 10:13; Phil. 1:6
- # Some non-Calvinists also affirm this notion.

## Crux of Calvinism

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- # Theological determinism: The universe and everything in it (including humans and their free acts) are *determined* by God.
- # Determined in what sense?
- # Certainly not in the “naturalistic causal” sense, for this would destroy any meaningful free will.

## Free Will: An Illusion?



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## Main Problem: Freedom

- ✦ In Calvinism, in what sense do humans have freedom?
- ✦ Whatever freedom means in Calvinism, it must be *compatible* with determinism.
- ✦ *Compatibilist* freedom.
- ✦ What is it, and what support is there for such a notion of freedom?

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## Compatibilist Freedom

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- # Claim: All actions are caused, even human free acts. (Principle of universal causality.)
- # Martin Luther's *Bondage of the Will* and Jonathan Edwards' *Freedom of the Will*.
- # Causes could be external or internal (e.g., a belief or a desire).
- # Some argue that free acts are "self caused." (Doesn't seem to help.)

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## Divine Control in Calvinism

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- # If compatibilist freedom is true, God can control everything but still allow human free acts.
- # Basically, God sets up the conditions that causes people to act the way He wants.

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## Theological Fatalism

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- # Claim: Divine foreknowledge rules out incompatibilistic freedom.
- # Nelson Pike, "Divine Omniscience and Voluntary Action," *Philosophical Review* 74 (1965).
- # Divine foreknowledge not temporally necessary: power over the past. [Okham, Plantinga, Fredosso]

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## Problem of Evil

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- # Calvinists deny that God causes evil, but that He allows evil free acts.
- # But why? Why not set things up so that no evil free acts occur?
- # Standard answer: "free-will defense."
- # Free-will defense is weakened by compatibilism.

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## Free Will and Culpability

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- # If compatibilist freedom is true, then why are humans morally responsible?
- # Standard answer: it's a mystery. But why isn't it just a plain contradiction?
- # What about 1 Cor. 10:13?  
Humans must have freedom to refuse God's way out.

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## Summary

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- # Calvinism: Full divine control (theological determinism).
- # Freedom is compatibilist.
- # Theological fatalism: divine foreknowledge entails compatibilism.
- # Problem of evil.
- # Problem of culpability.

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## Final Remark

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- # “All Christians are thorough Calvinists when they come to singing and praying!”  
[C. H. Spurgeon, “The Lifting Up of the Bowed Down,” Sermon no. 1426, delivered July 14, 1878 at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington.]

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## Further Reading

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- # J. L. Walls and J. R. Dongell, *Why I Am Not A Calvinist*, InterVarsity Press, 2004.

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