

God's Certainty and Man's Choices

How does God's control relate to human decisions?

Three different views

1. God's control is exhaustive, predetermining all choices, allowing no open choices

God foreknows all things. The way he foreknows all things is that he predetermines all things. They can't be foreknown otherwise. If all things are predetermined, then no choices are open. There is only one path available.

a. There are no open choices, including amoral ones

If, in my pantry were post-toasties and corn flakes, and I chose to eat the post toasties this morning, then I had no option to eat the corn flakes. It was predetermined that I eat the post-toasties and not the corn flakes. God may know that the corn flakes takes 1 minute longer to eat, allowing me to avoid a car accident, which saved the life of a person who would later give birth to a son that would grow up to marry my grand-daughter, etc.

Guy accidentally hits his thumb with a hammer and says, I'm glad I got that over with

b. Adam had no contingencies (Christ was a lamb slain. God ordained Adam to sin. Adam had no alternate path other than the one he took)

c. Unbelievers have no contingencies (God's elect individuals must believe. God's nonelect individuals must reject Him.)

d. Believers have no contingencies (If God is sovereign, no creature, not even believers with the indwelling Spirit, do anything that was not predetermined. When a believer sins, that sin was predetermined (through secondary causes and permission) and works in some way for God's greater glory.

Exhaustive view, God is the writer of the play. It has all been written ahead of time. The actors must quote each line exactly as written. We do what he has

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decreed. We must take a single predetermined path in every instance. God's exhaustive sovereignty requires it.

Free will is an illusion

or

Compatibilism—God's exhaustive control and man's free will are compatible: Man is not forced to take the one path, but chooses it based on his own desire. Desire is the means by which God causes individuals to choose the predetermined path. God decrees the desires and the will of man to choose the one path in every instance.

Man is free in this sense: he is not forced to choose against his will. But God controls man's will and thus controls all of man's decisions with no contingencies.

What would be some problems? God holds all people accountable for their sins, He is angry with them, He commands them to do otherwise, and implores all people to repent, and blames them for their disobedience. God's sovereignty must be harmonized with his love and holiness and equity (which are also divine attributes)

If every sin was inevitable, there would be no way of escape for believers (1Cor 10:13)

If there is only one will in the world (God's will). God is really fighting against himself. Angry with his own decrees.

2. God's control is over-arching, allowing foreknown open choices

God has sovereignly chosen to give man open choices. Created in His image, man has been given free moral agency to make self-determining choices within God-ordained freedoms and limitations.

Man is not totally free. Man cannot fly over a building without some equipment. Physical and mental boundaries God has set. Man cannot save himself. Man cannot be saved apart from Christ. Man cannot avoid judgment day. Man cannot escape the law of sowing and reaping. Man cannot do anything unless God allows it.

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God foreknows all things, having omniscience (including middle knowledge—knowledge of what free creatures WOULD do under all possible scenarios).

What God foreknows is certain to occur (man will) but what men choose *is not necessary (not man must)*. God foreknows and foreordains all things through his knowledge of man's free choices.

a. People have all sorts of amoral open choices (right sock first or left sock first, etc.)

b. Adam had a contingency (No sin nature—unconfirmed favorable disposition toward God—His choice was free and open, so God held him accountable). It was certain to God he would eat (Christ a lamb slain), but still the choice was open to Adam. The day before, when Adam didn't eat, God knew with certainty he wouldn't eat.

c. Unbelievers have contingencies (They have a sin nature (unavoidable), Unbelievers cannot not sin, but they don't sin as much as they could and they do sin more than they have to—And God will judge them according to their works in the judgment. Unbelievers can respond to the drawing of God to salvation. God holds sinners responsible for their lack of repentance and faith)

d. Believers have contingencies (there is a way of escape for any temptation)

Over-arching view, God is the writer of the play. God chose to allow adlib within limits, albeit he knows exactly what each actor will say ahead of time, and has already written the play he wants through his actors' scripted and adlib lines. All our choices are certain to God in eternity but not necessary to us in time.

What would be some problems? How can a choice be certain to God and free to man? How can anything be foreknown with certainty if it is not predetermined and necessary? If God merely foreknows what we will do, is not man calling the shots rather than God?

3. God's control is self-limiting, allowing unforeknown future choices

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Recent development (Open theism) This view by me and all I know would be deemed unsatisfactory

God foreordains many things and man has no choice but to comply with God's predetermined plans. However God has sovereignly chosen to give man open choices. Created in His image, man has been given free moral agency to make self-determining choices within God-ordained freedoms and limitations.

The choices for which God holds man accountable are open choices. If future choices are truly open, then they are not knowable. As God cannot lie or cannot know about square circles, so God cannot know the results of truly open future choices. The future outcome of open choices does not exist to be known by anyone. God is a personal God who is open to influence through the decisions and actions of people, as evidenced by His repenting and answering prayers.

Self-limiting view, God is the writer of the play, but the play continues to be written. While God does not foreknow every future line in the play, as a personal interactive writer, he uses every line to accomplish his predetermined ending. Our open choices are neither certain to God in eternity nor necessary to us in time.

What would be some problems?

Isa 46:10 God declares the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure:

If God does not know the future, his prophecies involving open choices are merely anticipations of the future, not declarations of the future. How could he declare the end from the beginning if he doesn't know the results of all choices that could influence the end?

If God changes his mind in relation to man, God is not immutable (unchangeable). God says "I change not". God repenting is anthropomorphisms, akin to anthropomorphisms of God having arms and ears, etc. (wings).

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Fill out the chart (How does God's control relate to human decisions? Are our choices certain to God? Are our choices open to us?)

	God's Certainty	Man's Choices
Exhaustive	Certain	Closed
Over-Arching	Certain	Open
Self-limiting	Uncertain	Open