

## A Succinct Contrast Between Calvinism and Extensivism

I seek to represent both views accurately. This is true of Calvinism when I consider their beliefs and the entailment of those beliefs. Here are the three reasons I seek to represent Calvinism as articulated by the most knowledgeable Calvinists. For further reading, you may read my book, *Does God Love All or Some*, and my blog, [ronniewrogers.com](http://ronniewrogers.com).

1. Such an approach dishonors Christ.
2. They are my brother and sisters in Christ (I was a Calvinist for 33 years)
3. It is the clarification of Calvinism's *actual* beliefs and the entailments of those beliefs that demonstrate Calvinism is not faithful to John's gospel or the gospel according to Jesus

View one: In Calvinism, God elected some to be the recipients of His salvational love and grace, so that not only *would* the elect believe and be saved, but He determined from eternity past that they *could only* believe and be saved by God; the elect are the ones whom God *causes* to be renewed<sup>1</sup> (regenerated, restitution, born again) before believing (faith) so that they could and would believe the gospel and be saved.

"I use 'renewal' to refer to the initial, divine, monergistic work of salvation, encompassing the varied terms used by Calvinists to depict the deterministic, monergistic work, such as regeneration, restoration, restitution, and any other designation of God's initial, irresistible grace prior to the exercise of faith.

These works are all selective in that they are only applied to the unconditionally elect, and they are monergistically efficacious in changing the person from a spiritually dead and passive hostile rebel against God, *so that they will freely exercise faith in Christ*. In cases such as regeneration (born again), it is a partial salvific work. This same prior work of God is withheld from the nonelect so that they *cannot* exercise faith. For clarity's sake, not only *can* the elect person freely believe, but he *cannot* resist freely believing."

In this plan, God equally chose as it pleased him not to include many as recipients of his salvific grace so that not only *would* they not believe and be saved, but they *could not believe* and be saved; they are the non-elect (sometimes called the reprobate). The non-elect exists solely because God was pleased not to elect them to salvation and, therefore, he withheld his salvational grace from them so that not only *would* they not be saved, they *could* not be saved.

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<sup>1</sup> "I use 'renewal' to refer to the initial, divine, monergistic work of salvation, encompassing the varied terms used by Calvinists to depict the deterministic, monergistic work, such as regeneration, restoration, restitution, and any other designation of God's initial, irresistible grace prior to the exercise of faith. These works are all selective in that they are only applied to the unconditionally elect, and they are monergistically efficacious in changing the person from a spiritually dead and passive hostile rebel against God, so that they will freely exercise faith in Christ. In cases such as regeneration, it is a partial salvific work. This same prior work of God is withheld from the nonelect so that they *cannot* exercise faith. For clarity's sake, not only *can* the elect person freely believe, but he *cannot* resist freely believing." John 6 Authorial Glossary

Everything, thought, decision, and act of every person is predetermined to be what it is; accordingly, God's determinism extends to his salvific plan and beyond to include every microsecond and event. Thus, faith (believing) is the *consequence* of God's renewal work in his elect rather than the *cause* of God's renewal work and salvation.

Therefore, one can actually discern the will of God at any given moment by observing the world around them.

*Ultimately*, there is no difference between those who go to heaven and those who go to hell because they are all sinners who deserve hell. Those in heaven are there only because God chose to extend grace and renew (regenerate, be born again) them so they *could only* believe the gospel and go to heaven. In contrast, God chose not to extend that grace to the vast majority of the human race, so that they *could only not* believe because it pleased him for them to perish in hell. *Ultimately*, that is why some are in heaven, and some are not.

John Piper said, "The book of life represents God's free and unconditional election. In the New Testament the book of life is synonymous with the list of those who are elect and predestined for eternal life."<sup>2</sup> (Rev 13:8) John Calvin said, "Those, therefore, whom God passes by he reprobates, and that for no other cause but because he is *pleased* to exclude them from the inheritance which he predestines to his children."<sup>3</sup> (italics added)

View two: in Extensivism, God salvationally loves his created and procreated human beings and desires for every person to believe the gospel and, thereby, be saved (John 3:16). To that end, He provided His Holy Spirit to convict the world of sin (John 16:7-11), for the gospel to be in the power of God to enable all to believe (Rom 1:16) and save those who believe (Rom 10: 8-13). They, who believe the gospel, **are in** Christ, who is the elect one, (Eph 1:4) and they are in the elect one by believing in him (Eph 1:13), which everyone can and should do because that is the salvific will of God as is to allow those who choose to spurn his grace and not believe to do as they wish and perish without God's grace in hell. God supplies grace so that all can come by faith (Titus 2:11), and when they do, He will cause them to be born again (John 3:1-3)—regenerated (renewed). Therefore, whereas in view one God's renewal work is the *cause* and believing is the *consequence*, in view two believing is the *cause* and God's renewal work is the *consequence* of believing.

Whichever view happens, it is because of God's grace, and nothing that happens is outside of God's grace.

God determines some events to occur *apart from* human causation or influence, and other events to occur *as a result* of people exercising their freedom of choice.

Four things God determined:

First, some events would be unaffected by human choices, actions, or causation.

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.desiringgod.org/resource-library/taste-see-articles/late-night-meditations-on-the-book-of-life>, accessed 4/9/11

<sup>3</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes of Christian Religion*, Book 3, Chapter 23, page 226.

Second, some events would be as they are because of human choices or actions.

Third, salvation would be offered to everyone, and everyone *could* and *should*, by God's grace, accept God's gracious offer. And a person's salvation would result from the person believing the gospel, and a person's judgment would result from a person not believing the gospel.

Fourth, the ability to exercise choice between options, including whether to believe the gospel and be saved or reject it and be lost, is always by God's grace.