

Compatibilism (Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility)

John M. Frame on “Compatibilism”

(God’s determining and Man’s free will are compatible):

Compatibilism maintains that people are free to do what they desire to do. “Adam before the Fall acted according to his desires, which then were godly. After the fall, sinners still act according to their desires, but those desires are sinful. The redeemed are enabled by God's grace, and progressively, to desire things which are excellent; and they are free to act according to those desires. The glorified saints in heaven will have only pure desires, and they will act in accordance with those... “If we have difficulty here, it may be because we fail to understand the nature of the sinner's bondage. It is a moral and spiritual bondage, not a metaphysical, physical or psychological bondage. If, as in my robot-machine illustration, someone is physically forced to do something he doesn't want to do, then of course his bondage removes his responsibility for the act. Confronted with his "deed," the person would have a valid excuse: "I couldn't help it; I was physically forced to do it." But imagine someone coming before a human judge and saying, to excuse himself of a crime, "I couldn't help it, your honor; I was forced to do it by my nature. Since birth I've just been a rotten guy!" Surely there is something ironic about appealing to depravity to excuse depraved acts! If our defendant really is a "rotten guy," then, far from being an excuse, that is all the more reason to lock him up! My point, then, is that although physical (and some other kinds of) bondage can furnish valid excuses for otherwise bad actions, moral bondage is *not* such an excuse. I can't imagine anyone disputing that proposition once they understand it.” John M. Frame http://www.frame-poythress.org/frame_articles/1993FreeWill.htm

One of the best statements on compatibilism is from John Calvin:

“...we allow that man has choice and that it is **self**-determined, so that if he does anything evil, it should be imputed to him and to his own voluntary choosing. We do away with coercion and force, because this contradicts the nature of the will and cannot coexist with it. We deny that choice is free, because through man's innate wickedness it is of necessity driven to what is evil and cannot seek anything but evil. And from this it is possible to deduce what a great difference there is between necessity and coercion. For we do not say that man is dragged unwillingly into

sinning, but that because his will is corrupt he is held captive under the yoke of sin and therefore of necessity will in an evil way. For where there is bondage, there is necessity. But it makes a great difference whether the bondage is voluntary or coerced. We locate the necessity to sin precisely in corruption of the will, from which follows that it is self-determined. (John Calvin from [Bondage and Liberation of the Will](#), pg. 69-70)