

2. I disaffirm that faith is the evidence of the new birth, which is the unambiguous and ubiquitous claim of Calvinism. Piper avers, “Faith is the evidence of new birth, not the cause of it.” Again, Piper states, “Except for the continual exertion of saving grace, we will always *use our freedom* to resist God.” In like manner, R.C. Sproul declares, “We do not believe in order to be born again; we are born again in order to believe.”

Consequently, according to Piper, Sproul, and other Calvinists, given a choice, man will always choose to reject God and stay in his sin, and God causes a man to be born again, and only then will man believe. Hence, man is forced into a position of necessarily believing against his will. This is not to say that the faith is forced against the person’s will, but rather that regeneration was forced upon the person against his will. Again, Piper asserts, “The native hardness of our hearts makes us unwilling and unable to turn from sin and trust the Savior. Therefore conversion involves a miracle of new birth. This new birth precedes and enables faith and repentance. Nevertheless, faith and repentance are our acts. We are accountable to do them .... God grants us the inclination we need. This is a clear example of what I call Calvinism’s double-talk.

First, in the Calvinist view, being born again is not a mere inclination, it is an inviolable determination made by God alone—monergistically. Piper clearly, as do other Calvinists, places regeneration prior to faith, which had to happen against the sinner’s will, their statements to the contrary notwithstanding. His statement that “faith and repentance are *our acts*” is a little misleading. While it is true, according to Calvinism, that the human does them subsequent to regeneration, which transpires quite apart from any human involvement, faith and repentance are also the *unalterable* and *inevitable* acts of the once regenerated person. Therefore, there *may be* some remote sense in which people are accountable, but one cannot glean any amount of uncertainty from a Calvinist understanding of that accountability or responsibility; thus, they redefine how Scripture commonly portrays it and how it is understood in everyday life. While they are free to redefine its everyday usage—not Scripture’s usage—they should be forthright about it so as not to obscure the truth of Calvinism. Further, most, if not all, usages of accountability and responsibility in Scripture and everyday usage imply libertarian choice; I believe that is what *most* people believe the Calvinist means, but it is emphatically not. This is a disquieting reality.

According to Calvinism, it is a responsibility of the regenerated that he actually has no choice not to do. In other words, the bitter reality of Calvinism is that the predetermined elect are regenerated by God without regard to anything else,” and the one God chooses will be regenerated in absolute contradiction to his fallen desire. Then, the one who is regenerated will have no more option not to repent and have faith than he had not to be regenerated.

Consequently, any implying or inferring that the sinner, prior to regeneration, has a choice in being regenerated, exercising faith, or not being regenerated, and after regeneration has a choice of not exercising faith, is an illusion. This is a disquieting reality.

The lack of *real* choice to exercise faith or not is the chilling truth of Calvinism, and it is this truth that takes words like “responsibility”, “accountability”, and the normal teaching of Scripture’s repeated pleas, injunctions, and warnings to new levels of obfuscation. I do adamantly disagree with those who hold to such understandings, but I am even more profoundly troubled by unwillingness on the part of *many* Calvinists to speak forthrightly about these realities in such a way that people understand exactly what is involved in being a Calvinist. ***I am thoroughly convinced that the vast majority of people who embrace Calvinism do not fully understand or accept this truth of Calvinism, and they think it is not essential to Calvinism, when in fact it is.*** This is a disquieting reality. I realize that some Calvinists fully understand this and do their best to communicate it, and I applaud their forthrightness.

Calvinist endeavors to exalt God by emphasizing unconditional election and monergism actually diminishes God. One cannot diminish the *work* of the creator without diminishing its creator, which Calvinism does by strapping man with compatibilism, whereby man was created to inevitably sin and be totally passive in regeneration. For example, what if one looked beneath the majestic mystique of the Mona Lisa only to find that Da Vinci actually painted by the numbers, or we learned that Beethoven’s *5th Symphony* was actually composed by an alien being who could do nothing but produce such a masterpiece. Either discovery would tell us more about the creators of such works than the works themselves. The point being, Calvinism’s reduction of man’s freedom to that of compatibilism tells us more about their diminished view of God—who apparently could not be in sovereign control of truly free choice beings—than it does about man. Finally, I disaffirm that man since the fall in the garden can exercise faith in Christ apart from the enabling provision of God; however, enabling is categorically different from irresistibly causing.