

## An Exposé on Reformed Theology (RT) and Calvinism (CV), Part 7

### It Never Entered My Heart!

Barry O'Dell

**T**he core tenet of the hideous and hopeless doctrines of RT/CV is the sovereignty of God. According to that particular view, God has predetermined everything that has already happened and ever will happen. All of the good and all of the evil is ultimately the responsibility of God. While that is not what the word sovereign means, that is how it is used in RT/CV. The technical definition of *sovereign* is “possessing supreme or ultimate power.” To truly understand RT/CV, it must be understood that they may use the same terms that members of Christ’s church use, but they usually have very different definitions. Also, when questioned about certain events and God’s role in them, the Reformed Theologian will “punt” to the sovereignty of God.

The London Baptist Confession of 1689 says of the decree of God, “*God hath decreed in himself, from all eternity, by the most wise and holy counsel of His own will, freely and unchangeably, all things, whatsoever comes to pass; yet so as thereby is God neither the author of sin nor hath fellowship with any therein; nor is violence offered to the will of the creature, nor yet is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established; in which appears His wisdom in disposing all things, and power and faithfulness in accomplishing His decree.*” As already noted, these doctrines stand at the core of RT/CV. The entire system either stands or falls here.

Notice the convenient exceptions that this man-made doctrine permits - after stating that God has decreed “*from all eternity all things, whatsoever comes to pass.*” The first exception is that God is not the author of sin. If God is not the author of sin, as the Confession asserts that He is not, then God has not decreed “*all things, whatsoever comes to pass.*” What does “*all things*” mean? And, if “*all things*” truly means all things, God MUST be the author of sin. However, if God is not the author of sin, then God is not the author of all things! RT/CV cannot have it both ways. This system of doctrine contains errors of both grammar and Biblical reality.

The next extremely convenient exception made by this pathetic doctrine is that the free will of man suffers no violence from the eternal decree of God.

Really?!! If God has determined **everything** from all eternity and, if **everything** means **everything**, how has man’s free will not suffered violence? Those who hold to RT/CV want God to be in charge of everything - except when their doctrine contradicts obvious truths found throughout the word of God. Consider the following passages in light of the completely hopeless and illogical system of RT/CV...

First, in regard to sin, the Bible reveals that sin is the end result of each individual having been “*drawn away of his own lusts and enticed*” (Jam. 1:13-15). It also teaches that temptation comes in the forms of the lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and the pride of life (1 Jn. 2:16). Sin is defined as an individual’s violation of God’s law (1 Jn. 3:4). Sin is each individual’s own responsibility and so is giving in to temptation. Ezekiel 18 explains this concept perfectly! Thus, if **everything** really does mean **everything**, God must absolutely be responsible for each individual’s violation of His law!

Second, if, as Reformed Theologians teach, God has decreed from all eternity all things that come to pass, what are we to make of the following passages? To the people of Judah God said, “*And they have built the*

**“Either God is sovereign over everything, or He is not.”**

*high places of Tophet, which is in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire; which I commanded them not, neither came it into my heart*” (Jer. 7:31). This idea is also stated in Jeremiah 19:4-5 and 32:34-35. RT/CV wants to lay everything at the feet of God unless, of course, it is sinful. How convenient a doctrine! Yet, God Himself acknowledged that His own people began to do things that had **never entered His heart!** Does **everything** really mean **everything**? Not when you’re inconsistent in your doctrine, as are the twisted and perverted doctrines of RT/CV! According to RT/CV, God is sovereign and has determined everything that will ever happen. Yet, they do not really want Him to be sovereign over everything because, according to what they claim to believe, that would have to include sin! As stated earlier in this article RT/CV falls on its face in both the light of simple grammatical rules and the revelation of God’s will in Scripture. Either God is sovereign over **everything**, or He is not. You cannot have it both ways and be consistent.

**A**nytime theology is debated between a Christian and a Reformed Theologist/Calvinist the same two accusations fly toward the Christian - you do not know our position and/or you are unloving. I am here to tell you that I do know the theology and I am not dignifying the other with a response. The former of the two accusations is not unfounded. Reformed Theology/Calvinism is convoluted and difficult to comprehend. As I study it I keep swinging back to the realization that I am just too simple minded to be able to adhere to such a convoluted system of theology. It is not out of ignorance that I eschew Reformed Theology/Calvinism, but from understanding much more of it than I desire. I have never been more grateful for the simple way God's Word is written than I am now after having studied for this article about how prayer works with Theological Determinism. Spoiler alert: it doesn't!

**What is Theological Determinism?** "Theological determinism (TD) is the view that God determines every event that occurs in the history of the world" (<https://iep.utm.edu/theological-determinism/#SH3a>). TD is built from the idea of Determinism. Sam Harris, modern day neuroscientist-turned-philosopher, wrote a book about free will in which he cited determinism and the reason you and I have no free will. His book has been summarized thusly: *"We do not have the freedom and free will that we think we do. Yes, you can make conscious choices, but everything that makes up those conscious choices (your thoughts, your wants, your desires) is determined by prior causes outside your control. Just because you can do what you want does not mean you have free will because you are not choosing what you want in the first place"* (<https://jamesclear.com/book-summaries/free-will>). I hope we can begin so see how TD developed from an adaptation of this atheistic method of conceptualizing our reality. Determinism makes humans nothing more than mindless, biological automatons bound by algorithmic programming. In the same way, TD makes humans nothing more than spiritual automatons slave to a different algorithm. In both instances we are nothing more than ultra-advanced Artificial Intelligence programs.

**Prayer and Theological Determinism.** For the sake of this article I ask that you assume two things. One, God has one will broken down into two parts. He has a revealed will (His word) that He will not alter and a tangential will that He is willing to alter. Two, prayer is how we have access to God and petition Him to alter His tangential will. As Christians we are told to pray for man and the government, *"I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty"* (1 Tim. 2:1-2). Notice that there is a purpose for that prayer, *"that we may lead*

*a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty."* I humbly propose that since we are told to pray and that prayer serves a purpose, then the idea of TD fails. God could, in fact, command us to pray and the following of that command would serve no other purpose but our obedience to Him. However, that is not what is shown in First Timothy. Our prayers have a purpose beyond mere obedience. The exhortation to pray is given, for what we are to pray is given, and the purpose and effect of our prayer is given. Evidently then, God has not set in stone every event that occurs in the history of the world because of the purpose of prayer. We have an option here - chose to pray as we ought, for whom, and what we ought, and we can expect quiet and peaceable lives in all godliness and honesty. Or, not pray as we ought and we can expect to experience the converse. If all is predetermined, then our prayers would serve no purpose. Again, TD falls on its face. Can we find an example in Scripture where prayer was used to influence God's tangential will? I think we can. We all remember the account of Peter using the keys to the kingdom to open the door thereof to the Gentiles. Cornelius had been praying to God. Of the prayers of Cornelius it was said, *"Cornelius, thy prayer is heard, and thine alms are had in remembrance in the sight of God"* (Acts 10:31). One might well say, God had already predetermined to use Cornelius for this purpose, regardless of his prayers. I do not think this is the case as the word *"heard"* was used. Joseph Thayer defines the term (*eisakous*) translated, heard, as *"to listen to, assent to a request, to be heard, have request granted."* Now, Thayer is not the only one who defines the term in this way. Every lexicon I looked at gave the same consideration to that term. It is evident that God's revealed will was to reconcile the Jews and Gentiles in one (Eph. 2:11-17). What is not evident in God's revealed will is who He would use to break the ice, as it were. I am convinced that God's tangential will was affected by the prayers of Cornelius. If Cornelius' being used was predetermined, then his prayer was impotent. TD falls on its face.

There is no doubt that God is sovereign. He is the ruler of all and is the final decider in all things. There are some things that are predetermined from the foundation of the world. That being said, evidently, He loves us enough to grant us access to Him and gives us a mechanism whereby we can affect His tangential will. There is no way in heaven or earth this could be the case if TD is true. As has been said, if it is the case that TD is correct, then we are simply overly complicated Artificial Intelligence programs reacting in a predetermined way to a spiritual algorithm. GOD FORBID! I love my God and I am thankful to Him for everything, especially the things I have witnessed Him do for me and mine in our lives and, lately, ministry. Do not fall prey to the foolish machinations of overly-complex, highfalutin' theologies. Stick with the simple Word of God.

**I**n the Westminster Confession of Faith of 1646, which is a significant man-made document in Reformed Theology, we read, “By the decree of God, for the manifestation of his glory, some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life, and others foreordained to everlasting death. These angels and men, thus predestinated and foreordained, are particularly and unchangeably designed; and their number is so certain and definite that it can not be either increased or diminished.” This statement is from Chapter 3 called “Of God’s Eternal Decree.” Please pay attention to the specificity of the claims. The numbers of the saved and the lost are so certain and unchangeable that they “can not be either increased or diminished.”

Mark recorded these words of Jesus: “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mk. 16:15-16). Why? What’s the point? If the number of the saved has been determined from all eternity and, if that number is unalterable, there is no point in sharing the gospel! The gospel is God’s power unto salvation (Rom. 1:16). Faith is produced, not by a direct operation of the Holy Spirit, but by hearing the gospel (Rom. 10:17). The wayside soil in Jesus’ parable of the sower is a perfect example of this reality. “The seed is the word of God” (Lk. 8:11). There are some who, when they hear the gospel, will reject it. For example, when Paul went to Antioch of Pisidia there were some who rejected the gospel. After seeing the Jewish rejection to the preached gospel Paul said, “It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles” (Acts 13:46). This audience was responsible for rejection of the gospel, not because of the predestined plan of God to send them to hell. Rather, it was because they were “filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming” (Acts 13:45).

There is a “Sovereign Grace Community Church” in my local community. I have talked with the “pastor” on a few different occasions and he holds to Reformed Theology. I know what he believes. I know the doctrines of Reformed Theology and Calvinism. This church has a banner on the front of their building that says the following:

*“True love cares enough to speak and live the truth. Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom (Col. 1:28). Till we all come to*

*the...knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ (Eph. 4:13). By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples (Jn. 15:8). You are welcome at Sovereign Grace Community Church.”* Remember the doctrines to which this type of church holds. They may have a banner that says you are welcome, but their doctrine says “It doesn’t matter.” If you are not of the elect, if you have not been predestinated by God from all eternity, it does not matter how often you “go to church.” Remember, the numbers of the saved and the lost have already been determined and are so certain that they cannot be altered, even by one! Why does this church advertise? Why should they bother spending any money on advertising? If you are of the elect, you are saved - regardless of what you do. The evangelistic efforts of those who believe in RT/CV are an exercise in futility. Their evangelism is useless!

Fulton County Gospel News has spent over a year of editions addressing the foolish and hopeless doctrines of Reformed Theology and Calvinism for a reason. These doctrines were systematized by John Calvin and other reformers in the 16th century and are still in somewhat of a state of evolution today. Those today who espouse the doctrines admit repeatedly that this doctrinal system originated with “Saint” Augustine who lived from AD 354-430. Historically, churches of Christ have defined Calvinism with the acronym TULIP. While that is partly accurate, there is much more depth to this system. We must be sure that we completely understand the doctrine before we try to study it and combat it. As I wrote in the first article in this series, “It is my prayer that what you read in this and the next few editions of FCGN will enlighten you on this subject and equip you with a knowledge of God’s word so that you can identify and overcome the foolish and wicked doctrines of Reformed Theology and Calvinism.”

Original sin. Sinful nature. A direct operation of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit must empower you to live the Christian life. I can not help but sin. The Churches of Christ are hearing these things in their pulpits and classrooms and they are the doctrines of RT/CV. The God of the Bible is just and is no respecter of persons. David wrote, “Righteousness and judgment (justice - NKJ) are the habitation of His throne” (Ps. 97:2). Predetermining the number of the saved and the lost is neither righteous nor justice. Jesus died for all. Anyone can be saved. Man has a choice in the salvation of his soul. Choose this day whom you will serve (Jos. 24:15).

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