



Libertarian cats and thoughts on freewill.

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Do you believe in human freewill? Two basic approaches have been debated for thousands of years. First, some Christians believe in libertarian freedom. Here, freewill means people really could choose to act differently than they do. Sally chose to follow God, but she could have chosen to follow Baal instead.

Other Christians hold to voluntarist freewill. Here, freewill means we will to do what we are doing, regardless of whether we could do otherwise. Sally has freewill in following God because this is what she genuinely wants to do. She has no Baal-option, but because she really wills to follow this one path, she is not being coerced and is acting with freewill.



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Which version seems most biblical to you? Wouldn't a world of libertarians mean that parts of God's plan wouldn't get done and that he was only partially sovereign at best? It would be like herding cats. But if we're all voluntarists, doesn't sovereignty seem too easy for someone at God's paygrade?

Think about sovereignty. God is the Creator, and in the Bible he is the Creator not only because he starts creation, but because he completes it to the end of history. That's why we hear so much about God as Creator in the Book of Revelation. The end of the story is filled with imagery drawn from the beginning (Revelation 1:8, 2:7, 4:11, 13, 10:6, 21:1–6, 22:1–5, 13–14). Like a master builder God starts and completes his project—he is a true Creator. That is sovereignty.

But what version of freewill could God's sovereignty reckon with and still be Creator at the end? Revelation steams with the demand for decision. It sets us on the knife-edge: Choose! Now! But amazingly, there is no hint in Revelation that the New Jerusalem would have been better had there been no freewill. No hint that God wanted Heaven to be five-star, but because of our sinful choices, it will only be two-star, an eternal vacation at the Motel 6. No. Revelation steams with decision and God is utterly victorious. That is the great mystery.

So back to our rival versions of freedom: libertarian or voluntarist. Could God pull off the New Jerusalem using either form of freewill? If so, which version would trigger your greatest cry of praise? Would Revelation's vision of utter sovereignty be a higher achievement with libertarian freewill or voluntarist freewill?

It seems to me a Creator who could sovereignly herd libertarian cats into Heaven deserves higher praise. Voluntarists in the choir of Heaven might sing as conducted, but wouldn't libertarians dance for sheer happiness? Not congratulating themselves for choosing God over Satan but praising God's brilliance in achieving his vision with audacity, ingenuity, and love through a world steaming with real choice. For libertarians, escaping hell was a close shave, an immediate and real possibility for themselves, but here they freely stand by God's infinite wisdom and grace.

This is why, until I am convinced otherwise, my money is on libertarian freewill. Salvation is then a more dramatic feat on God's part. Sovereignty here works as the attractive and provocative power of God's love. A voluntarist choir in Heaven feels like a North Korean military parade—everyone's smiling and clapping, but do they really have a choice?

But how would God do it? How does he win when he goes on creating thousands of new ornery libertarian cats a day? That's a question worth pondering, possibly forever.