

Determined to Come Most Freely: Some Challenges for Libertarian Calvinism*

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Abstract

It is commonly held that Calvinism is committed to theological determinism, and therefore also to compatibilism insofar as Calvinism affirms human freedom and moral responsibility. Recent scholarship has challenged this view, opening up space for a form of Calvinism which allows for libertarian free will. In this paper, we critically assess two versions of ‘libertarian Calvinism’ recently proposed by Oliver Crisp. We contend that Calvinism (defined along the confessional lines adopted by Crisp) is implicitly committed to theological determinism, and even if it were not so committed, it would still rule out libertarian free will on other grounds.

1. Introduction

It is commonly held that Calvinism is committed to theological determinism.¹ Calvinism also affirms that humans make choices for which they are morally accountable, and those choices are free in some morally significant sense. Thus, compatibilist freedom is typically assumed to be the only kind of freedom consistent with Calvinism. However, recent scholarship has challenged the standard paradigm, arguing that Calvinism is committed to neither determinism nor compatibilism,

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¹ Richard A. Muller, *Divine Will and Human Choice: Freedom, Contingency, and Necessity in Early Modern Reformed Thought* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2017), 19–22.

and thus that a Calvinist may consistently hold to a libertarian view of free will (at least with respect to some human actions).² Spurred by this reassessment of the Reformed tradition, Oliver Crisp has explored the prospects of a ‘libertarian Calvinism’ in several recent publications, concluding that it is a live option for Calvinists.³ In this paper, we critically evaluate his proposals. We contend that Calvinism (defined along the confessional lines adopted by Crisp) is implicitly committed to theological determinism, and even if it were not so committed, it would still rule out libertarian free will on other grounds.

We will proceed as follows. First, we make preliminary remarks about some of the important terms in the debate, such as ‘free will’, ‘theological determinism’, and the propositional content of ‘Calvinism’. Next, we provide an overview of Crisp’s case for libertarian Calvinism, noting important differences between his 2014 and 2015 presentations, and situating them within the broader framework of contemporary philosophical work on free will and moral responsibility.⁴ After this stage-setting, we argue against Crisp’s case for libertarian Calvinism. We accept for argument’s sake the touchstone by which Crisp says that libertarian Calvinism should be evaluated, that of consistency with the great Reformed creeds and confessions, particularly the Westminster Confession of Faith (hereafter, WCF). Our argument is two-pronged: (1) WCF affirms theological determinism, thereby directly ruling out the claim that humans have libertarian

² Willem J. Van Asselt, J. Martin Bac, and Roelf J. Te Velde, eds., *Reformed Thought on Freedom: The Concept of Free Choice in Early Modern Reformed Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010); J. V. Fesko, *The Theology of the Westminster Standards: Historical Context and Theological Insights* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014); Richard A. Muller, “Grace, Election, and Contingent Choice: Arminius’s Gambit and the Reformed Response,” in *The Grace of God, the Bondage of the Will*, ed. Thomas R. Schreiner and Bruce A. Ware, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1995); Richard A. Muller, “Jonathan Edwards and the Absence of Free Choice: A Parting of Ways in the Reformed Tradition,” *Jonathan Edwards Studies* 1, no. 1 (2011): 3–22.

³ Oliver D. Crisp, “Libertarian Calvinism,” in *Deviant Calvinism: Broadening Reformed Theology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2014), 71–96; Oliver D. Crisp, “Girardeau and Edwards on Free Will,” in *Jonathan Edwards among the Theologians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2015), 80–106; Oliver D. Crisp, “Libertarian Calvinism,” in *Free Will and Classical Theism: The Significance of Freedom in Perfect Being Theology*, ed. Hugh J. McCann (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 112–30.

⁴ In our judgment, Crisp’s 2016 presentation does not advance on his earlier proposals.

free will; and (2) even if WCF does not affirm theological determinism—perhaps because it is metaphysically underdetermined—it makes various other claims which implicitly rule out libertarian free will.

2. Preliminaries

2.1. *Libertarian Free Will*

Free will is a capacity, ability, or power to act in ways for which one may be held morally responsible.⁵ One approach to the nature of free will has been called *libertarianism*.⁶

Libertarianism about free will is the conjunction of two theses:⁷

- a. *The free will thesis*: Some people sometimes act freely and with moral responsibility.
- b. *The incompatibility thesis*: Freedom and moral responsibility are incompatible with determinism.

We will briefly unpack these two theses in reverse order.

Ginet expresses the incompatibility thesis thus: “I am an incompatibilist. I hold that it is not metaphysically possible for there to be free and morally responsible action in a deterministic

⁵ Or, perhaps more accurately, free will is a set of capacities, abilities, or powers to act in ways for which one may be held morally responsible. However, we will proceed by using the singular. Some philosophers see deep distinctions between capacities and abilities and powers. Others see them as essentially the same sorts of thing. For what follows we will use them interchangeably, but the reader may substitute her preferred term in each case.

⁶ In this paper, we are concerned with *human* or *creaturely* free will. It is beyond our scope to discuss the nature of divine freedom, and our arguments do not presuppose any particular view of divine freedom (whether compatibilist, incompatibilist, or *sui generis*).

⁷ See, e.g., Peter Van Inwagen, *An Essay on Free Will* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), 13ff; Robert Kane, “Introduction,” in *Free Will*, ed. Robert Kane (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 17; Derk Pereboom, *Living without Free Will* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), xiv.

world.”⁸ Vihvelin concurs, stating that “incompatibilism is the claim that necessarily, if determinism is true, then the free will thesis [i.e., that someone is free] is false.”⁹ It is consistent to affirm the incompatibility thesis but reject the free will thesis. Those who accept both the incompatibility thesis (b) and the free will thesis (a) are called *libertarians*.

Turning now to thesis (a), the free will thesis. How should we understand the key concepts in (a)? It is not easy to answer this question. Part of the reason for this difficulty is that there are two conceptions of free will that philosophers have found important for describing what it is to have free will.¹⁰ In this paper, we will endorse both conceptions as capturing the notion of free will. These conceptions are:

- c. *The leeway conception*: An agent, A, has free will only if A could have acted otherwise than A in fact did.

- d. *The sourcehood conception*: An agent, A, has free will with respect to action ϕ only if A is the ultimate source or originator of A’s choice to ϕ .

Libertarianism endorses incompatibilist versions of (c) and (d).¹¹ That is to say, the libertarian thinks that the ability to act otherwise than one in fact did is *incompatible* with determinism. She

⁸ Carl Ginet, “An Action Can Be Both Uncaused and Up to the Agent,” in *Intentionality, Deliberation, and Autonomy: The Action-Theoretic Basis of Practical Philosophy*, ed. Christoph Lumer and Sandro Nannini (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2007), 243.

⁹ Kadri Vihvelin, “Arguments for Incompatibilism,” ed. Edward N. Zalta, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2011, sec. 1, <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2011/entries/incompatibilism-arguments/>.

¹⁰ For the history of the debate here, see Kevin Timpe, “Leeway vs. Sourcehood Conceptions of Free Will,” in *The Routledge Companion to Free Will*, ed. Meghan Griffith, Neil Levy, and Kevin Timpe (London: Routledge, 2016).

¹¹ Philosophers who are compatibilists will accept compatibilist versions of (c) and (d). We are not ruling out semi-compatibilism. Even semi-compatibilism includes a requirement that the agent be able to do otherwise; see Christopher Evan Franklin, “Everyone Thinks That an Ability to Do Otherwise Is Necessary for Free Will and Moral Responsibility,” *Philosophical Studies* 172, no. 8 (2015): 2091–2107.

will also think that being the ultimate source or originator of one's action is *incompatible* with determinism.¹²

To summarize: Libertarianism is the conjunction of (a) and (b), where (b) is understood as the strong modal claim that no action can be both determined and directly free, and where (a) is understood in terms of both leeway- and source-incompatibilism (i.e., (c) and (d)). This is how we will understand the 'libertarian' qualifier in 'libertarian Calvinism'.

2.2. Theological Determinism

Theological determinism may be broadly defined as the view that God determines all (not just some) events in the world, including human choices and actions. Theological determinism is a particular species of determinism *simpliciter*, the view that every event in the world is determined.

As Vihvelin has noted, 'determinism' is sometimes used in the literature as "an umbrella term for a variety of different claims which have traditionally been regarded as threats to free will."¹³ For the sake of clarity and precision, it will be useful to distinguish theological determinism from some other important determinisms. First, theological determinism should be distinguished from *logical* determinism, the thesis that all events in the world are determined by broad logical or metaphysical necessities. For example, if (at least some) events are determined by God's decree, and that decree is 'free' in the sense that it is not logically (absolutely) necessary, then logical determinism does not follow.¹⁴ Second, theological determinism should be

¹² For the details of why libertarians think doing otherwise and sourcehood are incompatible with determinism, see Ishtiyaque Haji, *Incompatibilism's Allure: Principle Arguments for Incompatibilism* (Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, 2008).

¹³ Vihvelin, "Arguments for Incompatibilism."

¹⁴ In connection with this point, we wish to underscore that determinism must be carefully distinguished from *necessitarianism* (the thesis that all events, including human actions, are absolutely necessary, and thus there is no possibility whatsoever of contrary action). This distinction has not always been clearly drawn in discussions of Reformed thought on freedom. That an action is determined (by God or by other factors) does not entail that the action is *absolutely* necessary, only that it is *conditionally* necessary (i.e., necessitated by the obtaining of prior conditions,

distinguished from both *physical* determinism (the thesis that every event is determined by prior physical events) and *nomological* determinism (the thesis that every event is causally necessitated by prior events, or states of the world, in conjunction with the laws of nature).¹⁵ Theological determinism may be *consistent* with these two other varieties of determinism, but it does not entail either one.

Since theological determinism does not entail logical, physical, or nomological determinism, arguments against the latter need not threaten the former. In particular, arguments purporting to demonstrate that free will is incompatible with logical, physical, or nomological determinism should not be taken as arguments against theological determinism—at least, not without supplementary argumentation. Nevertheless, since theological determinism is a species of determinism *simpliciter*, a sound argument for *the incompatibility thesis* (as defined above) would show that theological determinism is incompatible with freedom and moral responsibility. Hence if ‘Calvinism’ is defined in a manner that commits one (explicitly or implicitly) to theological determinism, it follows that ‘libertarian Calvinism’ is logically inconsistent.

As defined here, theological determinism entails nothing specific about *how* God determines events in the world. Does God determine events *causally* or *non-causally*?¹⁶ Does God determine events *directly* or *indirectly* (e.g., through secondary causes)? Theological determinists may offer a variety of answers to such questions, each of which in principle allows for a ‘both-and’ answer

which may themselves be logically or metaphysically contingent). Robert Kane, *A Contemporary Introduction to Free Will* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 6. When van Asselt et al. discuss Bernardinus de Moor, in whom “we face basically the same position” as the other orthodox and scholastic Reformed theologians surveyed, they describe his position as affirming that “God’s providence does pre-determine human actions, but the necessity involved here is only a hypothetical or implicative one...” Van Asselt, Bac, and Te Velde, *Reformed Thought on Freedom*, 233. This is precisely the position held by contemporary Calvinist philosophers, like ourselves, who claim that Calvinism is deterministic. Thus, we fully affirm the distinction between *necessitas consequentiae* and *necessitas consequentis*.

¹⁵ Nomological determinism may be distinguished from physical determinism inasmuch as it allows in principle for non-physical events and non-physical laws of nature (e.g., mental events and psychological laws).

¹⁶ An example of the latter would be the views of Hugh McCann and perhaps of Thomas Aquinas. Hugh J. McCann, “The Author of Sin?,” *Faith and Philosophy* 22, no. 2 (April 2005): 144–59.

(perhaps, say, God determines some events directly and other events indirectly). If Calvinism is understood to be committed to theological determinism, it does not immediately follow that Calvinism is committed to particular answers to these subsidiary questions. At the same time, depending on its other theological commitments, it may imply (or lean heavily toward) specific answers to some such questions.

2.3. The Content of ‘Calvinism’

In order to assess the viability of ‘libertarian Calvinism’ we need to understand the propositional content that constitutes ‘Calvinism’. This is a vexed issue, not least because the label ‘Calvinist’ can carry various senses depending on the context (likewise ‘Reformed’). Furthermore, there is an ongoing scholarly debate as to what counts as ‘mainstream’ or ‘historical’ Calvinism and how to characterize the distinctives and boundaries of the Reformed tradition.¹⁷

For the purposes of our argument, we can largely side-step such complexities. Since our critique is directed towards the version(s) of libertarian Calvinism proposed by Oliver Crisp, we will adopt for argument’s sake the touchstone of Calvinist orthodoxy that he himself adopts, namely, the Westminster Confession of Faith.¹⁸ In what follows, then, the content of ‘Calvinism’ will be understood to be the propositions affirmed by WCF.¹⁹ In our final section, however, we will draw some tentative conclusions about the prospects of other versions of ‘libertarian Calvinism’ where ‘Calvinism’ is understood differently.

¹⁷ The fact that some modern writers have styled themselves as ‘Reformed Arminians’ illustrates the point.

¹⁸ Crisp, “Libertarian Calvinism,” 2014, 74. Our objections could be developed from other Reformed symbols of the same era, such as the Savoy Declaration (1658) and the London Baptist Confession of Faith (1689).

¹⁹ One might object that WCF was intended as a political compromise document and not primarily as a philosophical document. Even so, political documents can have philosophical entailments; they can rule out some philosophical positions while allowing for others. To take one example: WCF 32.1 apparently rules out a materialist view of human persons, even though it does not require any particular non-materialist view (e.g., hylemorphic dualism versus Cartesian dualism). In any event, our purpose here is to evaluate Crisp’s proposal on its own terms.

3. Crisp's Libertarian Calvinism

In contemporary philosophical-theological literature, Calvinism is commonly characterized as affirming theological determinism and compatibilism (since orthodox Calvinists hold that humans sometimes act freely).²⁰ As we noted earlier, recent scholarship has questioned whether Reformed theologians historically held to these views. Some have interpreted this scholarship as affirming that the early Reformed theologians held to something like libertarian freedom, which would commit those theologians to *rejecting* both compatibilism and determinism.²¹ This is somewhat confusing given the recent scholarship's claim that early Reformed thought *excluded* libertarian freedom.²² In our judgment, the recent scholarship assumes an extreme form of libertarian free will. It therefore remains an open question whether early Reformed theologians might have endorsed a more moderate form of libertarianism.

Recently, Oliver Crisp has offered a philosophically informed account of what a moderate libertarian Calvinism might look like. Crisp does not himself affirm libertarian Calvinism; rather, he offers it as a way to broaden the set of views taken to be permissible for Calvinists, and as “an ecumenical olive branch” to libertarian non-Calvinists.²³ Nevertheless, Crisp's specific proposal

²⁰ David Baggett and Jerry L. Walls, *Good God: The Theistic Foundations of Morality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Gregory A. Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil: Constructing a Trinitarian Warfare Theodicy* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2001); Steven D. Boyer and Christopher A. Hall, *The Mystery of God: Theology for Knowing the Unknowable* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012); Thomas P. Flint and Thomas V. Morris, “Two Accounts of Providence,” in *Divine and Human Action: Essays on the Metaphysics of Theism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988); William Hasker, *Providence, Evil and the Openness of God* (London: Routledge, 2004); Paul Helm, *The Providence of God*, *Contours of Christian Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1993); Roger E. Olson, *Arminian Theology: Myths and Realities* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006); Jerry L. Walls and Dongell, Joseph R., *Why I Am Not a Calvinist* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004); Jerry L. Walls, “Why No Classical Theist, Let Alone Orthodox Christian, Should Ever Be a Compatibilist,” *Philosophia Christi* 13, no. 1 (2011): 75–104; Leigh Vicens, “Theological Determinism,” ed. James Fieser and Bradley Dowden, *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2014, <http://www.iep.utm.edu/theo-det/>.

²¹ Crisp, “Libertarian Calvinism,” 2014, 96; Crisp, “Girardeau and Edwards,” 80.

²² Van Asselt, Bac, and Te Velde, *Reformed Thought on Freedom*, 15, 38.

²³ Crisp, “Libertarian Calvinism,” 2014, 96.

presents us with a useful test case for assessing the prospects for libertarian Calvinism more generally.

Delineating Crisp's libertarian Calvinism is complicated by the fact that he has presented two distinct (and seemingly inconsistent) accounts. In this section, we will present both versions (which we will dub 'LC- α ' and 'LC- β ' respectively) before comparing and contrasting them.

3.1. Libertarian Calvinism (LC- α) in Crisp 2014

LC- α is composed of four main theses:

LC1. God ordains whatsoever comes to pass.²⁴

LC2. God causally determines the choices of the elect that lead to salvation.²⁵

LC3. Free will and moral responsibility are incompatible with determinism.²⁶

LC4. Some human beings are sometimes free and morally responsible.²⁷

LC1 affirms God's comprehensive decree as found in WCF 3.1. LC2 affirms the Confession's claim in 10.1 that salvation is monergistic. LC3 and LC4 jointly entail libertarianism. While LC3 finds no support in the Confession, LC4 is taken from various places (e.g., 3.1, 9.1, and 9.2). We will briefly unpack each thesis in terms of how LC- α understands them.

As Crisp notes, LC1, LC3, and LC4 appear to be incompatible. How is it that God ordains *whatsoever* comes to pass and yet humans can be said to be free in the libertarian sense? According to libertarian Calvinism, the problem arises not from the *scope* of divine ordination but rather from

²⁴ Ibid., 85.

²⁵ Ibid., 88, 89.

²⁶ Ibid., 91.

²⁷ Ibid., 88.

a certain construal of *how* God ordains all things, specifically, the idea that LC1 affirms theological *determinism*. LC- α denies that divine ordination is “determinist all the way down.”²⁸ God *ordains* human free actions, but does not causally *determine* them.

This immediately raises a question about LC2. If God’s ordaining is not deterministic, how should we understand the claim that God determines “the choices leading to the salvation of an individual”?²⁹ Here we must carefully distinguish the claim that divine ordination is not “determinist all the way down” from the claim that divine ordination is not determinist *at all*. LC- α affirms that *some* human choices and actions—those leading to salvation—are indeed determined. God must do this because (as WCF 9.2 states) fallen humans are unable to “will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation,” and so are unable to convert themselves, or even to prepare themselves for conversion.

LC- α thus sees God’s universal ordination as a sort of complex state of affairs:

It looks like libertarian Calvinism is a sort of mixed or complex view about human freedom and moral responsibility. Divine ordination includes elements of determinism (with respect to choices leading to the salvation of an individual) and indeterminism (with respect to many other mundane choices). . . . This does not appear to be incoherent, though it does mean divine ordination is a complex of two different sorts of thing.³⁰

Strictly speaking, what is “mixed or complex” in LC- α is not so much its view of freedom and moral responsibility but rather its view of how God “brings about” human actions: some actions

²⁸ Ibid., 96.

²⁹ Ibid., 89.

³⁰ Ibid.

he brings about deterministically, while other actions he brings about non-deterministically.³¹ As it happens, almost *all* views of divine ordination and providence allow that God determines *some* human actions.³² What is distinctive about LC- α is the *category* of actions God deterministically brings about, namely those actions leading up to an individual's salvation.

Finally, LC3 and LC4 jointly entail libertarianism. This commits LC- α to some further theses, namely:

LC5. Compatibilism is false.

LC6. Global determinism is false.

LC5 is just the contrapositive of LC3. LC5 states that it is impossible that there should be an action that is both determined and free (and morally responsible). We may suppose that LC5 is supported by the standard arguments for incompatibilism. LC6 is consistent with the determining of *some* actions—which thereby results in their not being free or morally responsible actions—but LC6 is inconsistent with the determining of *all* actions, since some actions are free and incompatibilism is true. We will argue later that LC- α is not consistent with Calvinism (as previously defined).

3.2. Libertarian Calvinism (LC- β) in Crisp 2015

³¹ Crisp does not explain the nature of this indeterminist “bringing about” of all free and morally responsible actions. Perhaps we need to distinguish between strongly and weakly “bringing about” of an action, and free and morally responsible actions are weakly brought about. But this is only a distinction, the content of which is obscure to us. One might think that Crisp could appeal to a Molinist story here, but libertarian Calvinism rules out Molinism by positing that salvific choices are divinely determined. In any event, we do not wish to pursue this further here; we only note that it is a problem for libertarian Calvinists to resolve.

³² Incompatibilists will want to say that if God determines a human S's action ϕ , then either A is not directly free, and therefore S is not responsible for ϕ -ing; or, if S is responsible for ϕ (perhaps as Pharaoh was responsible for his hard heart even though God hardened it; cf. Ex. 9:12), then S was directly responsible for something prior to ϕ , ϕ' , and S's responsibility for ϕ ultimately traces back to ϕ' .

In Crisp's "Girardeau and Edwards on Free Will," we see some key differences from his earlier (2014) presentation.³³ To appreciate the differences, first consider these remarks from Crisp's original description of libertarian Calvinism:

[T]here is a presumption among such theologians (I think, among almost all traditional, orthodox Christian theologians) that human beings must be free in some sense in order for their actions to be morally responsible. Moral responsibility is not decoupled from freedom in this theological literature. Indeed, to decouple these two things would be regarded as a step away from orthodox Christian belief.³⁴

Crisp suggests here that "traditional, orthodox Christian theologians" take free will to be a *necessary* condition for moral responsibility, and that libertarian Calvinists will be among them. But when we turn to Crisp's 2015 treatment, we see an apparent rejection of the view he had attributed to "almost all traditional, orthodox theologians," namely, that moral responsibility can be decoupled from freedom.

To appreciate this shift, consider first what Crisp refers to as "libertarianism *simpliciter*." He states that libertarianism *simpliciter* is comprised of three key claims: first, that global determinism is inconsistent with free will; second, that determinism is false; and third, that we can be held morally responsible only for libertarian-free choices.³⁵ Crisp then states that while libertarian *simpliciter* and libertarian Calvinism agree that "determinism is inconsistent with free will," the latter differs from the former in two ways. First, "libertarian Calvinists must deny that determinism

³³ Crisp, "Girardeau and Edwards."

³⁴ Crisp, "Libertarian Calvinism," 2014, 77.

³⁵ Crisp, "Girardeau and Edwards," 84.

is false.”³⁶ Second, libertarian Calvinists deny that determinism “is necessarily inconsistent with moral responsibility,” and therefore deny that “all choices that are determined are ones for which we cannot be held morally responsible.”³⁷ Thus, according to LC- β , free will is inconsistent with determinism but moral responsibility is not inconsistent with determinism.

Here is the problem. According to LC- α , actions determined by God are “actions that are not free and for which the fallen beings in question are not responsible.”³⁸ But according to LC- β , there are actions determined by God which are not free (because free will is inconsistent with determinism) but for which the fallen beings in question *are* responsible. It appears, then, that LC- β has ‘decoupled’ moral responsibility from freedom and therefore, according to LC- α , LC- β has “step[ped] away from orthodox Christian belief.”

But perhaps this is too quick. There may be a way to interpret LC- β such that Crisp does not have libertarian Calvinism decoupling freedom from moral responsibility. According to the standard ‘tracing’ principle accepted by almost all versions of libertarianism, an agent can be morally responsible for performing a determined action only if we can trace the performance of that action back to a prior libertarian free choice.³⁹ A classic example of applying tracing to a case of moral responsibility is the drunk driver. Suppose that once the alcohol content reaches a certain level in Ted’s blood, this sets off a deterministic chain in Ted’s brain causing him to drive his car drunk. Ted is morally responsible for driving drunk even though this is a determined action, because we can ‘trace’ Ted’s decision to drive back to a prior directly free action on his part. On such a ‘tracing’ approach, moral responsibility is not decoupled from freedom. The idea here is

³⁶ It is unclear why LC- β should differ from libertarianism *simpliciter* in rejecting *determinism*. Crisp defines the kind of determinism that libertarian *simpliciter* rejects as *global* determinism. But LC- β *also* rejects global determinism.

³⁷ Crisp, “Girardeau and Edwards,” 84, 86.

³⁸ Crisp, “Libertarian Calvinism,” 2014, 91.

³⁹ For an explication and defense of the tracing principle, see Kevin Timpe, “Tracing and the Epistemic Condition on Moral Responsibility,” *Modern Schoolman* 88, no. 1/2 (2011): 5–28.

that an agent can be *derivatively* responsible for an action ϕ of which she does not meet the libertarian control condition on freedom—and so ϕ is not a *directly* free action—if we can ‘trace’ ϕ back to a prior action over which the agent did have direct control. Thus a ‘coupling’ of free will and moral responsibility is preserved via tracing.

While the above tracing account allows a libertarian to affirm that some determined actions are such that we can be derivatively responsible for them, we doubt this is what Crisp had in mind. For when Crisp stated that libertarian Calvinism denies that determinism is necessarily inconsistent with moral responsibility, that was in the context of distinguishing libertarian Calvinism from libertarianism *simpliciter*. But surely Crisp does not hold that libertarianism *simpliciter*—a view he describes as “typical” libertarianism—is committed to the view that only *directly free* actions are ones for which agents are morally responsible. That would render libertarianism *simpliciter* unable to explain our ascriptions of responsibility in a wide range of cases where the agent lacks direct control over her action. Unless we are to envision standard libertarianism as a view lacking in explanatory power, we ought to understand it as affirming that agents can be *derivatively* morally responsible. Thus, libertarianism *simpliciter* does *not* assert that holding an agent morally responsible for an action is necessarily inconsistent with that action being determined, since that action could be traced back to a directly free action for which the agent is morally responsible. On libertarianism *simpliciter*, it is only *direct* moral responsibility that is inconsistent with determinism. Understood in this light, it seems that Crisp is claiming that libertarian Calvinism must deny that *direct* responsibility is necessarily inconsistent with determinism. But on LC- β , a determined action cannot be directly free. Thus, it appears LC- β *does* decouple freedom from moral responsibility after all.

In light of this substantial shift, we can generate a different list of libertarian Calvinism's essential elements. LC- β still affirms LC1, LC2, and LC4, but LC3 must be amended:

LC3*. Free will is inconsistent with determinism but moral responsibility is not inconsistent with determinism.

Before moving forward, we wish to make two observations about the second conjunct of LC3*. First, LC3* should be understood as saying that if S's action ϕ is determined (either locally or globally) then ϕ cannot be (directly) free, but S could still be (directly) morally responsible for ϕ . Second, as Crisp understands it, LC3* does not entail that *any* action for which a person is directly morally responsible may be determined, only a certain subset of actions. Precisely which actions are those? In the course of describing LC3*, Crisp states that according to Reformed theology, "No human being can save herself or himself . . . So all choices that yield salvation are not choices fallen beings are capable of making."⁴⁰ However, "Reformed theologians have also traditionally claimed that all human beings are responsible for failing to avail themselves of the salvation offered by the work of Christ."⁴¹ Thus, it appears that the morally responsible actions that are compatible with determinism are only those actions which constitute failing to avail oneself of Christ's salvific work.

But why think that the inability to avail oneself of Christ's saving work shows that moral responsibility is compatible with determinism?⁴² Perhaps the idea is that if S can be directly

⁴⁰ Crisp, "Girardeau and Edwards," 84.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 85.

⁴² It is questionable whether omissions may be described as actions at all. Some omissions may be; see Randolph Clarke, *Omissions: Agency, Metaphysics, and Responsibility* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014). However, it is doubtful that *every* case of failing to avail oneself of Christ's salvific work may be described as an action. For ease of discussion, we will proceed as if such omissions are actions.

morally responsible for something even though S could not do otherwise, then moral responsibility is compatible with determinism, *since the only reason determinism would rule out moral responsibility is by ruling out the ability to do otherwise*. But if this is so, LC3* looks decidedly *ad hoc*. It is not clear to us why *only* failing to avail oneself of Christ's salvific work would be consistent with being both morally responsible and unable to do otherwise. This is largely because the reasons to which Crisp appeals in defense of this notion *generalize* to a broader range of actions than just failing to come to Christ. However, we will delay pressing this objection until §4.2.

In light of the above analysis, we may now list the points of agreement and disagreement in Crisp's two versions of libertarian Calvinism.

LC- α :

- Global determinism is false.
- Both free will and moral responsibility are incompatible with determinism.
- Some non-salvific choices are free and morally responsible.
- Salvific choices are neither free nor morally responsible.

LC- β :

- Global determinism is false.
- Free will is incompatible with determinism but moral responsibility is not necessarily incompatible with determinism (it depends on whether the agent failed to do something).
- Some non-salvific choices are free and morally responsible.
- Salvific choices are morally responsible but not free.⁴³

⁴³ Again, Crisp is unclear whether *both* failing to accept Christ's salvific work *and* choosing to accept it are acts and omissions for which we are responsible, or only the first.

In the next section, we will present three distinct arguments against libertarian Calvinism that apply to both LC- α and LC- β .⁴⁴

4. Against Libertarian Calvinism

4.1. Calvinism and Theological Determinism

As we noted earlier, Calvinism is routinely characterized in the literature as a variety of theological determinism. Crisp's proposal directly challenges that characterization. We will now argue that the Calvinism represented by WCF does indeed affirm theological determinism; specifically, an active theological determinism according to which every event (including human free choices) find its ultimate determination in the will of God alone.

Consider first the following statements from chapter 3 of WCF ("Of God's Eternal Decree"):

God, from all eternity, did, by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely, and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass: yet so, as thereby neither is God the author of sin, nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures; nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established. (3.1)

Although God knows whatsoever may or can come to pass upon all supposed conditions, yet hath he not decreed anything because he foresaw it as future, or as that which would come to pass upon such conditions. (3.2)

⁴⁴ For conciseness, we will use "libertarian Calvinism" and "Calvinism" as shorthand for "Crisp's versions of libertarian Calvinism" and "Calvinism as represented by WCF," respectively.

WCF is clear that God *ordains* or *decrees* (the two terms are treated as equivalent) all events within the creation (“whatsoever comes to pass”). Crisp rightly observes that divine ordination *as such* doesn’t entail theological determinism. In principle, God could ordain some events without determining them (e.g., he could ordain them by a passive divine permission or through “weak actualization” based on his knowledge of counterfactuals).

However, WCF goes further: it also denies that God’s decree depends on knowledge of what *will* or *could* take place, or on knowledge of what *would* take place if certain conditions were met (i.e., knowledge of hypothetical conditionals of the form *if X were to occur then Y would also occur*). The central concern of 3.2 is to repudiate the notion that God’s decree is conditioned, even in part, on factors within the creation that are independent of him (which would include, of course, libertarian free choices). God *alone* is the source of his eternal decree. God doesn’t ‘consult’ anything *extra se* when he formulates his decree. To put the point in a quasi-syllogistic form: every event takes place according to God’s eternal decree; God’s eternal decree is not determined in any respect by anything external to or independent of God; therefore, every event is ultimately determined by God alone.⁴⁵

One of the underlying theological concerns in WCF 3.2 is to preserve God’s aseity and independence. In this regard, it’s instructive to connect 3.2 with assertions in the preceding chapter (“Of God, and of the Holy Trinity,” emphasis added):

There is but one only, living, and true God, who is infinite in being and perfection, a most pure spirit, invisible, without body, parts, or passions; immutable, immense, eternal,

⁴⁵ The ‘ultimately’ is required to avoid a collapse into occasionalism. To say that every event is *ultimately* determined by God is consistent with some events also being *proximately* determined by creaturely causes. WCF itself takes care to distinguish primary and secondary causes (3.1, 5.2).

incomprehensible, almighty, most wise, most holy, *most free, most absolute*; working all things according to the counsel of his own immutable and most righteous will, for his own glory... (2.1)

God hath all life, glory, goodness, blessedness, in and of himself; *and is alone in and unto himself all-sufficient, not standing in need of any creatures which he hath made, nor deriving any glory from them, but only manifesting his own glory in, by, unto, and upon them. ... In his sight all things are open and manifest, his knowledge is infinite, infallible, and independent upon the creature, so as nothing is to him contingent, or uncertain.* (2.2)

The reasoning behind 3.2 is straightforward: If God's eternal decree were conditioned on factors within the creation independent of him, God would not be "most free, most absolute." There would be external constraints on God's decree.⁴⁶ Likewise, if the decree had to incorporate factors within the creation independent of God, God would not be *all-sufficient*: the decree would depend on factors external to God which are not ultimately determined by him.

Furthermore, WCF explicitly states that *God's knowledge is not dependent on the creature*, which would seem to rule out variations on the Molinist model of divine ordination, according to which God's eternal decree is based in part on his 'middle knowledge' of what his creatures *would* freely choose if placed in particular circumstances.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ One might think that there have to be *some* external constraints on God's decree, such as the laws of logic, which are independent of God. However, this need not be so. Some theists favor a nominalist (or broadly non-realist) view of the laws of logic, which would pose no threat to divine aseity. Other theists have taken the view that the laws of logic are ultimately identical to divine attributes or divine thoughts, in which case they would not be *external* constraints on God. For a survey of views on God's relationship to abstract entities, see Paul M. Gould, ed., *Beyond the Control of God?: Six Views on the Problem of God and Abstract Objects* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014).

⁴⁷ In correspondence with John Martin Fischer, Michael Bergmann proposed that one way to distinguish God's foreknowledge of human free choices from past facts which causally determine those choices is to say that the former

In sum, WCF teaches not only that God decrees all things but also that God's decree is not conditioned by or dependent on anything external to him, such as the libertarian free choices of his creatures. Consequently, it's hard to see how one could consistently affirm the theological tradition represented by WCF yet reject theological determinism. If God ordains all things according to an infallible and immutable decree, and that decree originates entirely in God, how could it fail to be the case that God alone ultimately determines all things?

Such a robust form of theological determinism is incompatible with both versions of Crisp's libertarian Calvinism.⁴⁸ Indeed, it poses a challenge to any version of libertarian Calvinism where the 'Calvinism' part affirms that God ordains every event (as in WCF 3.2) and includes traditional Reformed affirmations of divine aseity and independence (as in WCF 2.1-2).

4.2. Libertarian Calvinism, 'Ought' Implies 'Can', and Leeway-Incompatibilism

Suppose that, contrary to the preceding argument, WCF is metaphysically underdetermined to the extent that it need not be read as implying theological determinism. Even so, it would not follow that WCF is consistent with libertarianism, because WCF may threaten libertarianism in ways other than affirming determinism. For example, WCF appears to conflict with the maxim that 'ought' implies 'can', and therefore with the so-called Principle of Alternative Possibilities. WCF

obtains "*because of* what I do now, not vice versa." Bergmann suggested that this move allows one to maintain the *compatibility* of divine foreknowledge and human free choices while affirming (as libertarians wish to do) the *incompatibility* of causal determinism and human free choices. Bergmann's distinction is relevant to the present argument in this way: WCF insists upon the absolute independence of God's knowledge, which is just to say that God does not know what he knows about human free choices *because of* those choices. This further underscores the difficulty of distancing WCF from theological determinism. John Martin Fischer, "Putting Molinism in Its Place," in *Molinism: The Contemporary Debate*, ed. Ken Perszyk (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 222. Cf. Philip Swenson, "Ability, Foreknowledge, and Explanatory Dependence," *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 94, no. 4 (2016): 658–71.

⁴⁸ Both LC3 and LC3*, when conjoined with LC4, entail that determinism is false.

thus rules out a major motivation for affirming the version of libertarianism Crisp ascribes to libertarian Calvinism.

Crisp makes it clear that LC- α requires *leeway incompatibilism*. Recall that leeway incompatibilism is the thesis that S's action A is directly free and directly morally responsible only if S could have done other than A. Although leeway incompatibilism understands this ability to do otherwise to be incompatible with determinism, it is not obvious that the ability to do otherwise is necessary for freedom. For example, 'classical compatibilists' and the 'new dispositionalists' have offered analyses of the ability to do otherwise that are compatible with determinism. More importantly, some philosophers have argued that moral responsibility does not require the (incompatibilist) ability to do otherwise. Perhaps the most famous argument comes from so-called Frankfurt-style counterexamples, named after Harry Frankfurt. Also important is John Martin Fischer's semi-compatibilist view, which offers a sophisticated account of the freedom (or, control) condition on moral responsibility, showing that the kind of control (or, freedom) needed for moral responsibility does not require the (incompatibilist) ability to do otherwise. The upshot is that if the incompatibilist understanding of the ability to do otherwise is not necessary for moral responsibility, it does not seem to be necessary for the sort of freedom we care about, namely, the freedom necessary for moral responsibility.

In response to these compatibilist proposals, leeway incompatibilists will often appeal to Kant's maxim that 'ought' implies 'can' (OIC). This maxim states that a person ought not to do an action ϕ only if she can do something other than ϕ . OIC is "an important motivation for leeway-based approaches."⁴⁹ This is because leeway incompatibilism seems to be committed to the

⁴⁹ Timpe, "Leeway vs. Sourcehood Conceptions of Free Will."

Principle of Alternative Possibilities (PAP), which asserts that a person is morally responsible for what she has done (or failed to do) only if she could have done otherwise.

OIC and PAP appear to be closely related. For example, Frankfurt notes that “the appeal of PAP may owe something to a presumption that it is a corollary of the Kantian thesis that ‘ought’ implies ‘can’.”⁵⁰ While Frankfurt goes on to reject this presumption, Nelkin thinks that it is largely correct.⁵¹ To see why, she asks us to consider a version of PAP as applied to blameworthy action (PAP-B), which states that a person is morally blameworthy for what she has done only if she could have done otherwise. Nelkin is not alone in thinking that OIC yields PAP-B. Copp and Widerker have both argued that OIC *entails* PAP-B.⁵² Roughly stated, suppose that Jack does something blameworthy, like pulling his sister’s hair. Then, it seems like Jack ought not to have pulled Demi’s hair. But from OIC, if Jack ought not to have pulled his sister’s hair, then he could have done something other than pull her hair. This entails that Jack is blameworthy only if he could have done otherwise. The conclusion is just PAP-B.⁵³ Copp and Widerker have used this insight to argue for PAP (in general) in the face of Frankfurt-style counterexamples.⁵⁴ Any argument

⁵⁰ Harry G. Frankfurt, *The Importance of What We Care About* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 95.

⁵¹ Dana Kay Nelkin, *Making Sense of Freedom and Responsibility* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 99.

⁵² David Copp, “‘Ought’ Implies ‘Can’, Blameworthiness, and the Principle of Alternate Possibilities,” in *Moral Responsibility and Alternate Possibilities*, ed. David Widerker and Michael McKenna (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2006), 265–300; David Copp, “‘Ought’ Implies ‘Can’ and the Derivation of the Principle of Alternate Possibilities,” *Analysis* 68, no. 297 (2008): 67–75; David Widerker, “Frankfurt on ‘Ought Implies Can’ and Alternative Possibilities,” *Analysis* 51, no. 4 (1991): 222–24.

⁵³ As we noted, this is a basic statement of the argument. As Copp points out, the derivation “requires a few additional premises, including a finely nuanced view about blameworthiness.” Copp, “‘Ought’ Implies ‘Can’, Blameworthiness, and the Principle of Alternate Possibilities,” 266. We should also note that the Widerker-Copp argument for the entailment has received a lot of attention in the literature. See, e.g., Widerker, “Frankfurt on ‘Ought Implies Can’ and Alternative Possibilities”; Gideon Yaffe, “‘Ought’ Implies ‘Can’ and the Principle of Alternate Possibilities,” *Analysis* 59, no. 3 (1999): 218–22; Ira M. Schnall, “The Principle of Alternate Possibilities and ‘Ought’ Implies ‘Can,’” *Analysis* 61, no. 4 (2001): 335–40; Gideon Yaffe, “More on ‘Ought’ Implies ‘Can’ and the Principle of Alternate Possibilities,” *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 29, no. 1 (2005): 307–12; Copp, “‘Ought’ Implies ‘Can’ and the Derivation of the Principle of Alternate Possibilities.”

⁵⁴ Frankfurt, *The Importance of What We Care About*, 1–10. While Frankfurt cases have become increasingly sophisticated in response to challenges, we present here a basic “prior sign” case. Pat is at the polling station, deliberating about whether to vote for mayoral candidate Tannen or McFly. Black, an evil neurosurgeon, has implanted a device in Pat’s brain that allows Black to monitor Pat’s neural states. Black’s device allows him to alter Pat’s neural states if the situation requires it, and make Pat do whatever Black wishes. For reasons that need not concern us, Black

against PAP, then, requires that we reject OIC (since OIC entails PAP). But since (it is claimed) OIC enjoys more intuitive support than speculative Frankfurt-style counterexamples, we ought to reject the latter and not the former.

The upshot is that, for the leeway incompatibilist, OIC seems to be more basic to libertarian free will than PAP, since the latter can be derived from the former. Thus, if the libertarian were to reject OIC, there would seem to be little motivation to accept PAP (and thus, PAP-B) as well. But if the libertarian were to allow that some people could be held directly morally blameworthy for failing to do what is morally required of them even though they could not do otherwise, then it looks like the libertarian has conceded that the freedom necessary to be held morally responsible for an action is not ruled out by determinism. It seems plausible, then, that if one's views conflict with OIC, they also conflict with leeway incompatibilism.

This invites the following objection to libertarian Calvinism: Calvinism rejects OIC, and therefore Calvinism undercuts a major motivation for versions of libertarianism which endorse the leeway condition. When discussing the Reformed claim that choices resulting in salvation are not choices fallen humans are capable of making apart from divine grace, because all humans are in bondage to sin, Crisp himself notes that Calvinism requires abandoning OIC. He points out that "Reformed theologians have traditionally claimed that all human beings after the Fall are morally responsible for failing to avail themselves of salvation offered by the work of Christ," even though they are unable to avail themselves of the salvation offered through Christ.⁵⁵ In response to the charge that this is unfair because, "surely 'ought' implies 'can,'" Crisp states, "it appears that the

wants Pat to vote for Tannen. If Black detects that Pat is about to vote for McFly, Black will activate his device and ensure that Pat chooses to vote for Tannen instead. As it turns out, Pat chooses on his own to vote for Tannen, and Black never has to activate his device. The proponent of FSC claims that in this case Pat's choice is free and Pat is morally responsible for making it, even though Pat could not have chosen otherwise than he did.

⁵⁵ Crisp, "Girardeau and Edwards," 85.

Reformed theologian must deny this.”⁵⁶ Thus, we find libertarian Calvinism to be caught in a tension: the *libertarian* part accepts OIC, but the *Calvinist* part rejects OIC.

While we think that WCF makes further assertions that undermine OIC (cf. WCF 15.6, 16.7, and 21), Crisp’s admission that libertarian Calvinists must reject OIC is enough for our purposes.⁵⁷ For since libertarian Calvinism must reject OIC, then, given the relationship between OIC and PAP, it appears that libertarian Calvinists should also reject PAP.⁵⁸ It is not clear what remains of leeway libertarianism once it is forced to give up OIC and PAP. If libertarian Calvinism is forced to hold that some people can have obligations they’re unable to discharge, and that some people meet the freedom condition required for moral blame even though they’re unable to do otherwise, why endorse *libertarian* Calvinism at all?

In response, Crisp might reply that LC- β is not affected by this argument because it denies that salvific choices are free (in the libertarian sense). In effect, LC- β restricts PAP (and by implication OIC) to a certain class of choices, namely, non-salvific ones.⁵⁹ However, the moves Crisp appeals to in defense of LC- β on this point only further undermine its libertarian credentials. Crisp cites Harry Frankfurt’s *The Importance of What We Care About* (1988) as providing resources for LC- β ’s denial that alternative possibilities are needed for moral obligation or moral responsibility when it comes to salvific choices.⁶⁰ There are two relevant chapters in Frankfurt’s book: “Alternate possibilities and moral responsibility,” and “Freedom of the will and the concept

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Of course, we mean, and we think Crisp means, only that Calvinists must reject OIC when ‘can’ is understood in the way the incompatibilist leeway theorist intends. Thus, while libertarian Calvinists must reject the standard libertarian version of OIC, compatibilist Calvinists could affirm a compatibilist version of OIC.

⁵⁸ Crisp seems to recognize this, for after stating that Reformed theology rejects OIC, he states that this problem results in denying that a person can be *morally responsible* even though he cannot choose otherwise, and this is just to deny PAP.

⁵⁹ We suspect many libertarians would view this as an outright rejection of PAP and OIC, but we will argue here on the more charitable assumption that it should be treated merely as a restriction.

⁶⁰ Crisp, “Girardeau and Edwards,” 85, n. 8.

of a person.” The former invokes the (in)famous Frankfurt-style counterexample (FSC), and the latter is an early statement of what have been called ‘mesh theories’ of free will. Whichever chapter Crisp has in mind, it is our contention that endorsing *either* of them undermines libertarianism.

Consider first FSCs. Briefly, in a FSC, an agent does what she wants to do and she does it on her own. However, there is another person—a ‘counterfactual intervener’—waiting in the wings, ready to forcibly override the agent’s action if it looks like she is not going to do what the intervener wants her to do. If FSCs succeed at all, then they succeed in showing that having the (incompatibilist) ability to do otherwise is not a requirement of *any* morally responsible action. This is because, as *arbitrary* cases, FSCs generalize to any (ostensible) case of morally responsible action. Crisp says that libertarian Calvinism is a hybrid view where “many mundane choices we now make every day” are such that they are “not consistent with divine determinism.”⁶¹ However, since FSCs employ arbitrary cases, one needs a *principled reason* for restricting FSCs in the way LC-β is forced to restrict them.

Second, consider mesh theories. Generally speaking, according to mesh theories free will is importantly about our choices and actions, and how those choices and actions ‘mesh’ with our inner states. If we are able to act on our own reasons and desires to be the kind of person we desire to be, then, as long as the relationship between our desires are of the right kind (they internally ‘mesh’), it doesn’t matter if our actions or desires have been determined. It is the lack of an internal mesh between our internal states that undermines free will and moral responsibility. Thus, if Frankfurt’s mesh theory is correct, there seems to be little ground upon which to deny compatibilism about freedom. Again, if Crisp is suggesting that a mesh theory only ‘works’ when considering a very narrow range of ‘non-mundane’ actions, Crisp needs to offer a *principled reason*

⁶¹ Ibid., 86.

for why this is the case. In sum, LC- β appears to make some damaging concessions which render its affirmation of *incompatibilism* wholly obscure. By appealing to either FSCs or mesh theories, LC- β seems to give away the store, all but conceding that moral responsibility *in general* is consistent with determinism.

As we indicated earlier, there may be a possible way out for libertarian Calvinism. Thus far we have spoken in broad terms about OIC and PAP. A rigorous analysis of these concepts will reveal several subtleties that affect our understanding of them. Crucially, for our purposes, both of them only apply to cases of *direct* freedom or moral responsibility. Thus, for OIC, if an agent ought not ϕ at time t , then either the agent can do other than ϕ at time t , or the agent *could* have done other than ϕ at some time t' , where $t' < t$. For example, having earlier promised to pick you up from the airport, I'm obligated to do so. But now I would rather stay home and watch *The Walking Dead*, so I take a drug rendering me unable to get up from my couch. Presumably I'm still obligated to pick you up from the airport, even though I cannot now do so. Our revised OIC says that if I'm obligated to pick you up from the airport at t , but I cannot pick you up at t , then I *could have* picked you up at t . For PAP, to say that an agent is blameworthy for ϕ -ing at t is to say that either the agent could do other than ϕ at t , or we can trace the agent's blameworthiness back to a time when the agent could have done other than ϕ .

With such considerations in mind, the libertarian Calvinist could perhaps claim that even though fallen humans cannot *now* come to Christ on their own, they're nevertheless responsible for their fallen state and for not coming to Christ because their inability traces back to a time when they *were* able to come to Christ on their own. In this way, libertarian Calvinism reconciles inability to come to Christ with moral responsibility for failing to come to Christ by maintaining that the responsibility is indirect rather than direct.

There are, however, several problems with this proposal. First, we demonstrated in §3.2 that LC- β denies that direct moral responsibility is always incompatible with determinism. Second, if Crisp were to appeal to this tracing interpretation, there would be no need to appeal to either FSCs or mesh theories at all. Finally, we note that this tracing option is not open for Calvinists, because WCF 7.1-4 makes it exceptionally clear that the “original corruption, whereby we are utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil” is something that obtains in all humans from birth: “the same death in sin, and corrupted nature, conveyed to all their posterity descending from them by ordinary generation.” Thus, there is no place (or rather, time) for a prior, directly free and responsible choice that can ground the derivative responsibility required by this tracing solution.⁶²

To summarize: LC- α is incoherent simply because the *libertarian* part depends on OIC and PAP, while the *Calvinism* part denies both. LC- β seeks to restrict OIC and PAP to non-salvific choices, but it does so arbitrarily; the compatibilist strategies it deploys in order to preserve moral responsibility for salvific choices are *unrestricted*, and thus one who endorses those strategies ought to renounce incompatibilism altogether.

4.3. Libertarian Calvinism is Inconsistent

We argued above that a consistent and principled form of libertarian Calvinism must reject the ‘ought’ implies ‘can’ maxim, yet doing so would remove much of the motivation to be a libertarian about ‘mundane’ human choices. The problems do not end there, however, for we will now argue

⁶² An anonymous reviewer suggests that Crisp might incorporate the tracing approach in this way: we are derivatively responsible for our inability to come to Christ because this inability traces back to a libertarian free choice of *Adam*. This is an interesting proposal, but even if one held to some version of Augustinian realism according to which we were, in some real sense, present “in Adam” when he sinned, the *epistemic* condition on tracing could not be met, and so tracing would fail. (For discussion of the epistemic condition, see Timpe, “Tracing and the Epistemic Condition on Moral Responsibility.”) In any case, if we are correct that WCF implies compatibilism then it would be contradictory to appeal to libertarianism (even pre-fall).

that libertarian Calvinism suffers from internal inconsistency at another point. To see why, recall that libertarian Calvinism (whether α or β) affirms that God *determines* the choices of the elect leading to salvation (LC2). Libertarian Calvinism also affirms incompatibilism (LC3 or LC3*), which entails that compatibilism is false (LC5). Consider now WCF 10.1:

All those whom God hath predestinated unto life, and those only, he is pleased, in his appointed and accepted time, effectually to call, by his Word and Spirit, out of that state of sin and death, in which they are by nature, to grace and salvation, by Jesus Christ; enlightening their minds spiritually and savingly to understand the things of God, taking away their heart of stone, and giving unto them a heart of flesh; renewing their wills, and, by his almighty power, determining them to that which is good, and effectually drawing them to Jesus Christ: yet so, as *they come most freely*, being made willing by his grace.
(emphasis added)

This presents quite a problem for libertarian Calvinism. According to WCF 10.1, God's predestination operates in such a way that the elect "come most freely" to a *saving* knowledge of Jesus Christ. Yet, libertarian Calvinism holds that fallen human beings "have no freedom to choose to be reconciled to God."⁶³ Consider a fallen human, Jones. Libertarian Calvinism, in keeping with Calvinism, states that Jones "cannot contribute to his being saved, he cannot choose to be saved. Nor can he choose to choose to be saved. ... So Jones cannot have a first- or second-order free choice that might contribute to his being saved."⁶⁴ The problem is acute: WCF asserts that the elect

⁶³ Crisp, "Libertarian Calvinism," 2014, 84; Crisp, "Girardeau and Edwards," 84.

⁶⁴ Crisp, "Libertarian Calvinism," 2014, 84.

freely come to acquire salvation, yet libertarian Calvinism explicitly denies that salvific choices are free; hence, it contradicts the very Calvinism it seeks to accommodate.⁶⁵

This situation, of course, is troublesome enough. But matters are even worse than they first appear. In keeping with historic Calvinism, libertarian Calvinism affirms that God *determines* the elect's coming to have a saving knowledge of God. Unregenerate persons are incapable of making choices that lead to salvation apart from divine grace (9.3), and so "God has to ensure their salvation by *determining* that outcome."⁶⁶ In order to determine the outcome, God must, among other things, determine the "choices leading to the salvation of an individual."⁶⁷ So Calvinism affirms that God determines the actions and choices leading to an individual's salvation, and the individual comes *freely* to his state of salvation. Calvinism therefore entails that some (directly) free choices are determined, which is just to say that Calvinism entails *compatibilism*. But since the libertarianism of libertarian Calvinism entails *incompatibilism*, it follows that libertarian Calvinism entails both compatibilism and incompatibilism, which is to say, libertarian Calvinism entails a contradiction.

5. The Prospects for Libertarian Calvinism

Crisp's project of exploring how much philosophical latitude the Reformed theological tradition allows is an important and worthy one. It would be particularly significant if it turns out that Calvinism, contrary to common assumption, is consistent with an affirmation of libertarian free

⁶⁵ Could the libertarian Calvinist claim that this 'freedom' is merely psychological in nature, rather than the robust metaphysical sort of freedom that libertarians and compatibilists are typically concerned about? We consider this unlikely. WCF seems to reflect a concern to uphold a robust sort of freedom: we're told that the elect come *most* freely and are made *willing*. Furthermore, these affirmations come immediately after claims about predestination, effectual calling, and determination, which is precisely the point where such assurances might be deemed necessary. A merely psychological sort of freedom would not be threatened by determinism.

⁶⁶ Crisp, "Libertarian Calvinism," 2014, 88, emphasis added.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 89.

will. We have argued, however, that Crisp's libertarian Calvinism is (i) inconsistent with the implied theological determinism of WCF, (ii) undercut by WCF's rejection of the 'ought' implies 'can' principle, and (iii) internally inconsistent with respect to whether salvific choices are free.

Since our arguments are directed specifically at Crisp's proposals, we do not claim that our objections will hold against all versions of libertarian Calvinism. There may well be other understandings of 'Calvinism' that can accommodate a libertarian view of free will. Nor do we claim that WCF (or any other Reformed symbol) should be taken as the 'gold standard' of Calvinist orthodoxy. We do suggest, however, that the burden of proof has been shifted: any future proposals for a 'libertarian Calvinism' ought to justify their Calvinist credentials, specify their theological and soteriological commitments, and explain how they evade the objections we develop here.

Considering this challenge, it is worth asking what attractions 'libertarian Calvinism' might hold. Perhaps there are some theologians who, in keeping with the Reformed tradition, wish to affirm a consistently monergistic view of salvation but are also persuaded by the philosophical arguments for incompatibilism and thus wish to endorse libertarianism. Leaving aside the question of whether incompatibilism has the upper hand in the ongoing (and highly complex) debates over the necessary conditions for free choice, we must note that neither version of Crisp's libertarian Calvinism actually *reconciles* these two desiderata. Rather, human choices are partitioned into two categories—salvific and non-salvific—and only the latter are accorded the status of being free and morally responsible. This is a segregation rather than a reconciliation. Moreover, as we observed in our discussion of Crisp's appeal to FSCs, it appears to be a quite unprincipled segregation.

Another possible attraction is that libertarian Calvinism presents a softer, gentler form of Calvinism, one that avoids the offense of theological determinism and the specter of a micro-managing Deity who causally determines not only whom you'll marry but what you'll drink at the

wedding. Crisp suggests that libertarian Calvinism presents something of an “ecumenical olive branch” to libertarian non-Calvinists: a room within the Calvinist castle for those who cannot stomach full-blown theological determinism. It seems to us that such hopes are misguided. For the one Calvinist tenet that non-Calvinists typically find most unpalatable remains untouched in Crisp’s libertarian Calvinism, namely, the doctrine of double predestination. According to both LC- α and LC- β , the most consequential choices any person can make in life, namely, those choices on which that person’s eternal destiny depends, are causally determined by God and *not* free. Arguably this view is even less appealing than that of the non-libertarian Calvinist, who at least wishes to maintain that such choices are made *freely* (albeit in the compatibilist sense). In any event, it’s hard to see why a libertarian non-Calvinist would find libertarian Calvinism to be more *theologically* tolerable than compatibilist Calvinism.⁶⁸

We tentatively conclude that the prospects of developing a ‘libertarian Calvinism’ that is both philosophically coherent and theologically well-motivated are dim.⁶⁹

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⁶⁸ One might suppose that libertarian Calvinism is better placed to refute the charge that Calvinism makes God the author of sin. For various reasons to doubt this, see the essays in David E. Alexander and Daniel M. Johnson, eds., *Calvinism and the Problem of Evil* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2016). Since libertarian Calvinism rejects both Augustinianism and Molinism, it is hard to discern what models of divine providence it would support, never mind whether those models could provide satisfying answers to the problem of evil.

⁶⁹ We wish to thank two anonymous reviewers for comments which helped us to clarify and refine our arguments.

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