

# Free Will Is Impossible Under Classical Theism — Cheat-Sheet

## CORE ARGUMENT

Classical theism's absolute omniscience, omnipotence, and creation *ex nihilo* make genuine human free will logically impossible. If God created every soul from nothing, knowing its exact destiny, then God is the author of all sin and damnation. This is an offensive argument for LDS apologists against traditional Christianity.

## KEY LDS ADVANTAGES

- **Intelligences are co-eternal with God (D&C 93:29).** God did not create human souls *ex nihilo*. God organized pre-existing intelligences into spirits. This eliminates the charge that God is the author of sin and damnation.
- **Agency is foundational to existence (D&C 93:30-31).** "All intelligence... [acts] for itself... otherwise there is no existence." Free will is not granted by God — it is inherent to intelligence itself.
- **Satan's plan was rejected because it destroyed agency (Moses 4:3).** Agency is so central that a plan to remove it caused the cosmic rebellion.
- **God operates within time.** Unlike classical theism's timeless, immutable deity, the LDS God interacts dynamically with free agents. This avoids the frozen-future problem.
- **Degrees of glory, not binary heaven/hell (D&C 76).** No eternal hell for the vast majority. Even the telestial kingdom "surpasses all understanding." This resolves the problem of God creating souls He knows will be eternally damned.
- **The premortal council involved genuine choice (Abraham 3:22-28).** Spirits chose which plan to follow — agency precedes mortality.

## KEY SCRIPTURES

Scripture	Point
D&C 93:29-31	Intelligence is co-eternal with God; "here is the agency of man"
2 Nephi 2:14-16, 26-27	"Free to choose liberty and eternal life... or captivity and death"
Moses 4:3	Satan's plan rejected for destroying agency
Abraham 3:18, 22-28	Intelligences are eternal; premortal choice was genuine
Deuteronomy 30:19	"Choose life" — genuine choice presupposed
Ezekiel 18:23	God desires repentance — incoherent under determinism
Matthew 23:37	Jesus's desire frustrated by human free choice
1 Timothy 2:4	God wills all saved; not all are — implies genuine freedom
James 1:13-14	Moral responsibility on the individual, not God
D&C 76:89-92	Degrees of glory; no eternal hell for most
D&C 121:41-44	God's power operates by persuasion, not compulsion

## CLASSICAL THEISTIC "SOLUTIONS" AND THEIR PROBLEMS

Solution	Problem
<b>Aquinas's "eternal now"</b>	Events are still fixed from the human temporal perspective; the problem is relocated, not solved (Hasker critique)
<b>Molinism (middle knowledge)</b>	God still chooses which world to actualize, making Him the ultimate determiner of who is damned
<b>Compatibilism</b>	Redefines "free" to mean "acting on desire" — most people find this unsatisfying; it calls determined actions "free" by fiat
<b>Calvinism</b>	Embraces determinism honestly but makes God the author of sin and damnation — morally monstrous
<b>Arminianism</b>	Affirms conditional election but still holds exhaustive foreknowledge, creating the same tension

## ONE-LINE RESPONSES

Objection	Response
"If God lacks exhaustive foreknowledge, He's not omniscient."	Omniscience = knowing all that is knowable; genuinely free future choices may not be "facts" yet.
"The LDS view makes God too limited."	A God who interacts with genuinely free agents is more personal than one watching a predetermined script.
"This is just Open Theism."	LDS theology adds co-eternal intelligences, embodied God, premortal existence, and degrees of glory — far more comprehensive.
"Intelligences being co-eternal undermines God's sovereignty."	Sovereignty through persuasion and love (D&C 121:41) is more admirable than sovereignty over puppets.
"God must control everything to guarantee His promises."	A master chess player wins without controlling the opponent's moves — God's power and wisdom suffice.
"The Bible teaches predestination (Romans 8:29; Ephesians 1:5)."	"Foreknew" and "predestined" can refer to God's plan, not individual determinism; the same Paul commands "choose" and "believe."

## PATRISTIC SUPPORT FOR FREE WILL

Father	Source	Position
Irenaeus	<i>Against Heresies</i> 4.37.1-6	"God made man a free agent from the beginning"
Origen	<i>De Principiis</i> 3.1	Foreknowledge does not cause events
John Damascene	<i>Exact Exposition</i> 2.25-30	"God knows all things beforehand, but He does not predetermine all things"

## THE CORE SYLLOGISM (FOR DEBATE)

1. Classical theism holds that God created all souls *ex nihilo* with exhaustive foreknowledge of their destiny.
2. A being who deliberately creates a soul knowing it will be eternally damned is the author of that damnation.
3. Therefore, under classical theism, God is the author of damnation — which is morally incompatible with a loving God.
4. LDS theology avoids this: intelligences are co-eternal (D&C 93:29), agency is inherent (D&C 93:30-31), and there is no eternal hell for the vast majority (D&C 76).

## ESSENTIAL LINKS

- [Agency — Church of Jesus Christ.org](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org)
- [Fair Latterday Saints: God's Foreknowledge and Free Will](https://www.fairmormon.org/articles/gods-foreknowledge-and-free-will)
- Blake T. Ostler, *Exploring Mormon Thought: The Attributes of God*