



The Threefold State of Man

Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. ¹⁹ For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. (Romans 5:18-19)

"It isn't fair." "Why would a righteous and all-powerful God allow such a thing to happen?" These complaints surface often, at times even among professing Christians in the midst of intense trial or pain. They build on a presumption that God either caused or orchestrated the event for some mysterious "greater good" that no one ever seems able to define or identify. This question of "gratuitous" evil as it is called in philosophical circles; evil that is so heinous that it has no rational or moral basis to exist, challenges all world views, not just historical Christianity. For example, it equally presents a nearly insurmountable dilemma to the proponents of godless evolution. If, as they allege, man has evolved into such a refined state, how do they explain the occasional acts of utter depravity that one human commits against another?

The focused question for us deals with the existence of God and such acts of utter depravity. Did God either cause or orchestrate the event for a mysterious "greater good"? Unacceptable answers to the dilemma include the following:

1. *God caused, orchestrated, decreed, or "allowed" it for a greater good not known to us.* Occasionally theologians will banter these terms, as well as others, in a futile attempt to avoid the obvious problem with this view; ultimately God is in fact responsible for the event either directly or indirectly. The Old Testament prophet Jeremiah encountered what was apparently an overt claim that God caused the depraved idolatry and other sins of his day, but he categorically rejected and refused it. He certainly didn't acquiesce to it. Earlier in Romans (third chapter first ten verses) Paul also confronted this idea and equally rejected it in quite direct language. In Paul's reasoning a claim that God causes or otherwise relies on our sins to accomplish His glory makes God the ultimate cause of the atrocity and removes Him from the moral high ground from

which Scripture consistently presents Him as the final Judge of the universe. In other words, if God causes sin either directly or indirectly He cannot then judge guilty humans for their sins. He becomes a sinner Himself by His involvement in the sins that He is supposed to judge. If He is thus involved in the guilt of human sin, He cannot righteously judge anyone else for their sins. Here Paul rejects all forms of error that in any manner whatever implicate God in the sins of humanity.

2. *God operates according to the views of common deists.* He created the universe, set it in motion, and effectively became an absentee landlord, having nothing whatever to do with anything or anyone in the universe. This view is foreign to Scripture and thus cannot claim Biblical grounds for its support. Throughout the Bible we see one record after another that contradicts the deist's claims of divine non-involvement. From the flood to the Law on Mt. Sinai to Jonah and the city of Ninevah to the greatest of all contradictions of deism, the Incarnation, God demonstrates His involvement in the affairs of humanity. For our discussion the question relates to the manner and degree of divine involvement. A cursory reading of Thomas Jefferson's Bible reveals the deist's strategy; deny all miracles that illustrate God's involvement with mankind.

Those who embrace the first premise—that God in some way is directly or indirectly and ultimately causatively involved in every event of human conduct—occasionally hurl the straw man objection to their objectors that any view other than their own is functionally deism. They attempt to play the "horns of the dilemma" false logical argument against their objectors, denying altogether that any alternative view exists. In their errant view God either must cause everything that occurs, or He must cause nothing. Further,

advocates of this errant view commonly build their false ideas on another logical fallacy, the “parts to the whole” fallacy. This error confuses one part of the whole of any logical entity to its whole. If my Toyota Camry is brown, this error presumes that all Toyota Camrys are brown. If God caused one birth defect (Gospel of John ninth chapter), He must cause every birth defect. Aside from building on multiple logical errors, this error also violates the basic character of God. It builds on eastern New Age, Star Wars pagan error; the “force,” deity, consists equally of two wholly contradictory personalities, the good side and the “dark side.” Thus in this view of God Satan is merely God’s “dark side,” a view of God that is abominable to the consistent and plain teachings of Scripture. In his opening thoughts James clearly rejects the capricious attitude of sinful humanity to blame God for either sin or the enticement to sin. “Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death. Do not err, my beloved brethren. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.” (James 1:13-17) Fausset and a number of other respected theologians make an emphatic point from this passage that man cannot blame God *either directly or indirectly* for his sin.

Our study passage, along with a rather large number of other Scriptures, consistently attributes sin, either in its origin or in its routine practice to man, not to God. In Ecclesiastes 7:29 Solomon equally rejects this errant view, “Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but *they have sought out many inventions.*”

The Biblical view of God and His involvement with man is relatively straightforward and logical compared with the errant views that compromise His moral character and His deservedly righteous basis for judging all sins at the last day. God created man in a moral universe, a universe to be governed and judged by His moral law, but man violated his charge and brought divine judgment upon himself, his offspring, and all of the natural creation. Both Solomon in the Old Testament and Paul in the New Testament clearly lay the responsibility for all kinds of evil at the feet of mankind, not at the feet of God. *Man, not God, is responsible for the existence of gratuitous evil, as well as all other forms of sin.* For all such acts of sin God shall judge and punish sinful humanity at the last Judgment. Could God have intervened

and prevented any particular act of sin? Of course He could have done so. But if divine intervention prevented every act of sin, there would be nothing for which God could or would judge mankind. Further this view transforms the universe into a robotic universe wholly orchestrated by God, altogether eliminating any sense of moral responsibility or accountability on man’s part. In the heat of trial and pain from sin, committed by ourselves or by others against us, we might think such a world would be an improvement. Whatever variety of similarities we may rightly attribute to man created in God’s image, moral consciousness and accountability for his conduct are clearly established in Scripture. The very fact of a final Day of divine Judgment affirms that God holds man accountable for his sins, something that God could not do according to Paul in Romans 3:1-10 if He is in any way responsible for man’s sins.

I used a common complaint against God and two of several errant explanations to introduce our next segment, the study of man. From the prologue to John’s gospel we studied the character of God. Since God is consistently presented in Scripture as immutable and wholly moral and just, we may safely build our study of God on these stable premises. Once we establish God’s character we may predict that, whatever He does under any and all circumstances He will remain consistent with His character.

Our study of man will be more complicated. Humankind exists with all degrees of moral perspective, including none at all. To develop a logical basis for our study of man we shall examine man from three distinct perspectives.

1. *Man as God created him.* Here we shall examine the brief but concise record of man’s creation and his moral character in the Garden of Eden.
2. *Man in his sinful and fallen condition.* What happened to man as a consequence of his sin, of his breaking the divine law and falling under the divine sentence against him for his sin?
3. *Man in his saved condition.* What kind of change occurs in the character of man when God saves him? How does God save him? What is the ultimate outcome of saved man?

Little Zion Primitive Baptist Church
16434 Woodruff
Bellflower, California

Worship service each Sunday
Joseph R. Holder

10:30 A. M.
Pastor