

Attic Answer #5

Calvinism & Armenian Views? What in the World Does All this Mean?

One of the ideas which go hand in hand with the Omniscience of God is the Doctrine of God's Providence. The ideology of God's Omniscience provides the foundation for understanding exactly how God relates and interacts with His creation. Contrary to the Deist point of view, the Biblical teaching is that God was, is, and will be active with and in His creation. One of the primary passages of Scripture that gives rise to this discussion comes from the book of Romans. Paul writes;

Rom 8:28-30... 28 "And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. 29 For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren; 30 and whom He predestined, these He also called; and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified." NASB

In the New American Standard, this phrase is present in the passage, "God causes all things." This phrase provides the crux of this discussion. In what way does God cause all things? Are we like chess pieces on a board? How does the concept of created free-will beings play into this statement? Therefore, it is the goal of this discussion to evaluate the two primary camps, Armenian or Calvinist while giving first and only choice to the Armenian Camp.

The Calvinist seeks to lay a solid foundation of causation. The Calvinist holds to the idea that God in a direct way or fashion causes all things. Everything is a result of his direct, divine decree. Nothing that is or was or will be is separate from God's directive. A Calvinist would say that Paul in the aforementioned Scripture is clearly saying that everything the man does is decreed by God for his purposes. The Calvinist has to take this logic to its fullest conclusion which states that God even is the source of evil and He even uses evil to achieve His own will. The Calvinist will then illogically claim that God cannot be held accountable for evil. The problem of the source of evil and its continued presence in the world is a real problem for Calvinists. Another major problem is the idea of created free-will beings. The question begs to be answered, how can one have free will if all of his choices are determined and directed? The idea of a puppet or robot comes to mind as some sort of preprogrammed unit. In a logical discussion this removes ultimate responsibility from the individual and places it completely on God. So, logically one could do whatever they wanted and give credit to God, good or bad. The Calvinist works their way around the perceived problem of free will by redefining the term free. They determine that free will is that which one most wants to do, and since one will always do what they most want to, then their actions are predetermined in a sense. Again this requires quite a detailed explanation and is difficult to understand as it seeks to redefine words. Due to the logical inconsistencies and the aforementioned discussion of the Molinist view of foreknowledge, this ideology in its entirety needs to be cast aside.

The other side of this coin is called the Armenian view. This view holds that the mechanism of casualty is that of direction or control. God directs or controls all things at all times. And by directing, it could be more properly stated that God has something to do with everything where

the Calvinist would say that God has everything to do with everything. The mechanism that God employs here is that He either permits or directs. Since the aspect of permitting is added then the idea of created free-will beings is possible in the purest sense of the words. Free agent beings are allowed to make free will decisions. God in his Omniscience is able to use the choices of man good or bad in order to accomplish His will in the world. Ultimately the Armenian still upholds that all things work together for good as God wills it, while still allowing for the free agent decisions of man to be woven into the fabric of God's ultimate plans. For example, utilizing the if/then paradigm from the Molinist camp, God's knows all the possible contingencies of my decisions. He is then able to co-opt my decisions good or bad into His master plan. For me it unfolds like a "choose your own ending book." For God, He sees all the possible branches of each and every action while knowing which branch at each fork will be chosen allowing for Him to co-opt good or bad choices. Again, this preserves an all-knowing God and free will created mankind. It is also possible in this camp that God at certain times may "force" a path if you will. Like a train moving down the tracks, God may hit the switch and change the course of a decision. Again, such as in the events of the book of Esther, we see God's direct intervention as well as His permissive direction all working together with free agent man kind to preserve the lineage of the Messiah. All things considered, it is clear for me that the Molinist view of God's omniscience and the Armenian view of providence is the most logical and Biblical ideology which work very well together to provide a solid foundation of understanding God's nature.