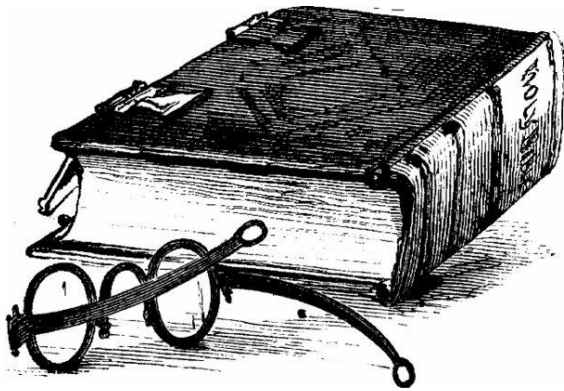


# Is God the Author of Sin?

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By Britt Williams



Some may be surprised to learn that Calvinism, by implication, actually makes God the *Author of sin*. Calvinism (also known as Reformed theology) advocates, among other things, an unscriptural and perverted view of the sovereignty of God, election, and the atonement. It asserts God, as sovereign Ruler of the Universe, either directly or indirectly causes all events, including sin...

*"Creatures are so governed by the secret counsel of God, that nothing happens but what he has knowingly and willingly decreed."*

–John Calvin (*Institutes of Christian Religion, Book 1, XVI*)

*"...the counsels and wills of men are so governed as to move exactly in the course which he has destined."*

–John Calvin (*Institutes of Christian Religion, Book 1, XVI*)

*"God is the only proper author and fountain; we only are the proper actors."*

–Jonathan Edwards

*"God controls not only natural events, but he also controls all human affairs and decisions:"*

–Vincent Cheung (*The Problem of Evil*)

Calvinists also attribute the fall of Adam to God's decree, teaching that God not only foreknew Adam would sin, but orchestrated it as well. John Calvin affirms this belief in the *Institutes of Christian Religion*...

*God not only foresaw the fall of the first man, and in him the ruin of his posterity; but also at his own pleasure arranged it."*

–John Calvin (*Institutes of Christian Religion, Book 3, XXIII*)

Some Calvinists teach that God is the originating cause of sin but not the proximate cause of sin. However, if Calvinists consistently follow their theology to its logical end, especially the doctrine of God's sovereignty, they must

attribute to God every act of sin, including murder, rape, sodomy, incest, child molestation, etc.

*"Thieves and murderers, and other evildoers, are instruments of divine providence, being employed by the Lord himself to execute judgments which he has resolved to inflict."*

–John Calvin (*Institutes of Christian Religion, Book 1, XVII*)

*"To our mind, either everything or nothing must be held in subjection to the will and providence of God. Even the wickedness of ungodly men is restricted by predestination..."*

–Gilbert Beebe

Calvinist theologian *James White*, in a debate with *Hank Hannegraaf* and *George Bryson*, was asked, "When a child is raped, is God responsible and did He decree that rape?" To which *Mr. White* replied...

*"Yes, because if not then it's meaningless and purposeless and though God knew it was going to happen he created without a purpose...and God is responsible for the creation of despair. If [God] didn't [decree child rape] then that rape is an (sic) element of meaningless evil that has no purpose."*

–*James White*.

Hence, since ultimately, all moral choices, past, present, and future, are subject to God's sovereign dictate, all sin can be traced to God Himself. Some Calvinists, usually referred to as "hard determinists", will readily admit this, while others, referred to as "soft determinists", often deny it or use theological and philosophical gymnastics in an attempt to cloak the implications of their theology. As *Vincent Cheung*, a popular Calvinist apologist boldly declares...

*"God controls everything that is and everything that happens. There is not one thing that happens that he has not actively decreed – not even a single thought in the mind of man. Since this is true, it follows that God has decreed the existence of evil, he has not merely permitted it, as if anything can originate and happen apart from his will and power."*

–*Vincent Cheung (The Problem of Evil)*

Ironically, Calvinists tend to theoretically believe concepts they deny in practice. If a child molester boldly proclaimed God caused him to molest little children, Calvinists would rightfully conclude he was a deluded liar and demon possessed. However, when the theologian essentially declares the same concept, they applaud him as orthodox. Such reasoning is not only inconsistent but absurd. According to Calvinists, God commands men to abstain from what He has decreed that they do, causes them to do, yea, in what they have absolutely no choice but to do, and then He utterly condemns them for doing it. This is not the God of the Scriptures...

*“Behold, God will not cast away a perfect man, neither will he help the evil doers...”*

*–Job 8:20*

*James 1:13-17* clearly challenges the Calvinist concept of God as the *Author of 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*

If God, being holy, is above tempting men to do evil, who can dare believe He would cause them to do evil? And yet some Calvinists insist *James 1:13* is misapplied when used metaphysically.

*“James is pointing out what the Christian should consider and address in his struggles as a Christian; he is not dealing with metaphysics.”*

*–Vincent Cheung (The Author Of Sin)*

*Mr. Cheung*, of course, is merely offering his biased opinion. We must realize that metaphysics can be very subjective, especially when applied through the presuppositions of our theological bents. In my estimation, *James 1:13-17* holds significant and profound metaphysical relevance: *“God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man,”* offers me two ethical absolutes that undermine the doctrine of determinism as taught by Calvinists.

Indeed, God can, through His providence, turn what *men meant for evil* for good (Gen 50:20). Likewise, He can use the worst of situations to sovereignly chastise, teach, and conform His people to His Son, Jesus Christ (Rom 8:28), but God never initiates, causes, or otherwise induces sin or evil. God is not the *Author of sin*. Yet, Calvinists teach that God, in His sovereign plan, introduced evil for His glory and did so ultimately to bring about *“good”*. However, the Scriptures teach such a concept, for God or man, has never been part of true, Apostolic theology. In fact, such carnal reasoning is condemned as dangerous indeed. The Apostle Paul, inspired by God's Spirit, declared...

*“And not rather, (as we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say,) Let us do evil, that good may come? whose damnation is just.”*

*–Romans 3:8*

## **DID GOD CREATE EVIL?**

Some Calvinists even assert God created evil. Calvinists often cite *Isaiah 45:7* as a proof text for this false and blasphemous doctrine. Notice how the verse reads...

*“I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things.”*

*–Isaiah 45:7*

The evil spoken of in this verse is obviously not moral evil, but natural evil. The Hebrew word literally means "calamity", which is physical evil. Notice, the text in *Isaiah 45:7* does not read, “I make righteousness and create evil”. No, the “evil” spoken of here is contrasted with peace because the evil referred to is calamity. Likewise, there are other Scriptural references pointing to God bringing natural evil or calamity on a nation, city, or people as judgment for sin (Neh. 13:18; Jer. 21:10; 25:29; Amos 3:6). God hates evil (Prov 6:16-19; Isa 61:8; Jer 44:4; Am 5:21; 6:8; Heb 1:9; Rev 2:6, 15), therefore, it is illogical to suggest God is the *Author of sin*.

True, God created everything in the physical or material world. However, God did not create moral evil. Evil is not material, but volitional. It is a moral disposition of free moral agents and involves, by nature, choice. Thus, evil is merely the absence of conformity to God’s law in moral agents.

*“...(even) Augustine maintained that evil was only 'privatio boni', or an absence of good, much like darkness is an absence of light. An evil thing can only be referred to as a negative form of a good thing, such as discord, injustice, and loss of life or of liberty.”*

*–Wikipedia (Theodicy)*

We cannot deny that God created the potential for evil by creating free-moral agents endowed with a free-will who have the ability to resist God and violate His law. Nevertheless, God did not create moral evil or disobedience. Thus, man, as a free moral agent choosing to reject God and disobey His law, is the source of moral evil.

## **CAN THE “AUTHOR OF SIN” BE EXEMPT FROM MORAL RESPONSIBILITY?**

Calvinism, with its skewed view of the sovereignty of God, philosophically funnels everything back to God, even sin itself. Hence, “*God is the Author of sin*” is an inescapable deduction of Reformed theology. However, the next logical step creates increased philosophical and moral tension: *if God causes men to sin is He not then responsible and morally culpable?* Not surprisingly,

with conscience and reason raging, most Calvinists are uncomfortable making God a “sinner”. Waxing irrational, some Calvinists cling to God as *Author of sin* while unashamedly attempting to blame man...

*“Man is a responsible moral agent, though he is also divinely controlled; man is divinely controlled, though he is also a responsible moral agent.”*  
–J.I. Packer

Mr. Packer’s statement is a glaring theological contradiction. How can God justly hold men accountable for sin He has, either directly or indirectly, decreed they commit?

Others employ theological and philosophical *smoke* and *mirrors* seeking to obscure, cloak, and explain away the obvious ethical problems such a hypothesis presents. Mr. Cheung, in his article “*The Author of Sin*”, bluntly states...

*“...if God directly causes you to sin, it does make him the ‘author’ of sin (at least in the sense that people usually use the expression), but the ‘sinner’ or ‘wrong-doer’ is still you. Since sin is the transgression of divine law, for God to be a sinner or wrong-doer in this case, he must decree a moral law that forbids himself to be the Author of sin, and then when he acts as the author of sin anyway, he becomes a sinner or wrong-doer.”*  
–Vincent Cheung (*The Author Of Sin*)

It is absurd to suggest that God can be cosmically behind all sin and yet be expunged from all moral responsibility for sin. Can the turn-coat FBI agent who masterminds a spy ring actually expose, apprehend, indict, testify against, and help convict spies he facilitated without implicating himself? I think not. Neither can the Calvinist God, who unquestionably governs all the affairs of men, hold men who are predestined to reprobation accountable for their sins without making Himself culpable.

*“That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from thee: Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?”*  
–Genesis 18:25

*“Doth God pervert judgment? or doth the Almighty pervert justice?”*  
–Job 8:3

*“Yea, surely God will not do wickedly, neither will the Almighty pervert judgment.”*  
–Job 34:12

*“And he shall judge the world in righteousness, he shall minister judgment to the*

*people in uprightness.”*  
–Psalms 9:8

*“God forbid: for then how shall God judge the world?”*  
–Romans 3:6

Moreover, how can men be responsible for actions they do not have the will to perform or ultimately the freedom to resist? If the Scriptures teach that *law* and the *knowledge of the law* are both prerequisites for culpability, which it does (Lev 4:13-14; Deut 1:39; Rom 3:20, 4:15), how much more the will and ability to obey the command? Granted, though the Bible teaches men can resist specific acts of sin, no man can fully obey God apart from divine grace (Rom 7:18; Phil 2:13; Heb 13:21). However, from a Calvinistic perspective, men have no real choice in the matter. God governs and controls all. Can we, based on Scripture, logically establish moral “responsibility” apart from “responsibility”? The answer is a resounding “no”. This is a Scriptural and philosophical absolute. Hence, if God is the author of sin, God is accountable for sin.

Calvinists say those who question God do so because His ways violate their carnal concept of justice. All agree that fallen humanity can have unusual ideas about justice, but God reveals Himself as just and defines His justice via the Scriptures. Calvinists often say that if we understood divine justice, it would no longer be divine, or some similar tautology. What strange reasoning. If we can understand God’s Word will it cease to be God’s Word? Surely, God's people, filled, led, and taught by God's Spirit, can comprehend, at least to some degree, God's justice? Without the revelation of true justice, (which is displayed by God and His Word) men could not walk righteously or fulfill God’s plan in the earth.

Furthermore, for the Calvinist, a theological contradiction arises when God shows indignation toward those who, by living in sin, are only fulfilling their divine destiny in accordance with God's predetermined decree?

*“Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience.”*  
–Ephesians 5:6

It is amazing that Calvinists vehemently deny that God works at cross purposes with Himself. If reprobates disobey God, harden themselves in sin, and ultimately shun the gospel because God sovereignly predetermined they do so in His secret will, why then does God not agree with what He decreed?

## **IS GOD SUBJECT TO HIS OWN LAW?**

*“...for thy truth: for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name.”*

–Psalms 138:2

Amazingly, many Calvinists believe God, as Sovereign Ruler of the Universe, cannot be held to the standard of His own law. Is this true? Calvinist apologist, *Vincent Cheung*, in his blog article entitled “*The Author of Sin*”, boldly stated...

*“Whether or not God is the author of sin, there is no Biblical or rational problem with Him being the author of sin.”*

Really, *Mr. Cheung*? If God is responsible for every act of evil then He has broken His own law. Such an assertion, according to the Word of God, is impossible, not because God is above His own law, but because such behavior is contrary to His holy nature.

*“Know therefore that the LORD thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant...”*

–Deuteronomy 7:9

*“He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he.”*

–Deuteronomy 32:4

*“Which made heaven, and earth, the sea, and all that therein is: which keepeth truth for ever...”*

–Psalms 146:6

I propose that God could never violate His own law nor compel others to do so. I base this absolute on several Biblical principles, namely:

1. God is holy. Holiness, as defined by Scripture, is to be conformed to God’s moral law. Granted, there are some areas where God’s moral law applies only to man, nevertheless, to cause men, in any way, to violate His law is against God’s nature (James 1:13).
2. God and His Word are synonymous. If God cannot deny Himself (2 Tim 2:13) how could He breach His own character by violating His Word or causing men to do so?
3. God the Father and Jesus Christ, both being part of the triune Godhead, are the same in essence (Col 2:9). Jesus Christ, the eternal Son, never broke the law of God but fulfilled the law. This being true, it is reasonable to assume God cannot break His own law.
4. God’s Spirit inspires holiness and conformity to moral law (Rom 8:4; Gal 5:16, 22-23). Would the same Spirit who effectually restrains sin in redeemed man in time inspire sin in our holy God in eternity? Again, I think not.

5. God is love (1 Jn 4:8). Love is conformity to moral law (Rom 13:10). Moreover, God's character is immutable; He cannot change. Therefore, how could God violate His law and be consistent with His revealed nature?

6. God is not the *Author of confusion* (1 Cor 14:33). Nothing is more disorderly and confusing than sin. Thus, God cannot be the cause of sin.

Therefore, we conclude that God cannot be the *Author of sin* and remain true to His revealed nature throughout the Scriptures.

*"This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all."*

*-1 John 1:5*

-B.W.