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Section: Doctrine of God

**HANDOUT NOTES – Part 2**

**Q18. Does God control and have authority over all things?**

Yes. He rules in and over all things. He is in control of all things. God does all that He wills with creation.

* **Introduction**

**Proverbs 3:5** Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding.

* **God's Sovereignty over Mankind: Each and Every Person to Ever Live**
* **Two Pillars of Truth from Scripture:**
1. God is absolutely sovereign, and He never sins—His will is supreme, He has preordained all that comes to pass, and He is the first cause of all things.
2. Each human has a real will, genuinely acts accordingly as a second cause, and is morally responsible for all he/she does.
* **Biblical View: Divine Concurrence**
1. God is the first cause of all things;
2. two (or more parties) can act truly and genuinely in the same event; and
3. these acts can produce an outcome without all parties having the same intent.
* **Two False Views: Deism and Pantheism**
* **Deism**

Belief in the existence of a supreme being—a creator—who generally does not intervene in the universe.

* **Pantheism**

Belief which identifies God with the universe or regards the universe as a manifestation of God—inflating universal, divine agency unto no longer acknowledging genuine non-divine causes.

Orthodox (meaning historically, biblically sound) Christians reject both Pantheism and Deism.

Deism and Pantheism share the common false belief that God and the creature cannot both be genuine causal agents producing the exact same effect.

* **Divine Concurrence Considered**

**The 1689 Confession of Faith:** “From all eternity God decreed everything that occurs, without reference to anything outside himself. He did this by the perfectly wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely and unchangeably. Yet God did this in such a way that he is neither the author of sin [meaning God is not to be blamed for sin, and He is not guilty of doing sin] nor has fellowship with any in their sin. This decree does not violate the will of the creature or take away the free working or contingency of second causes. On the contrary, these are established by God’s decree. In this decree God’s wisdom is displayed in directing all things, and his power and faithfulness are demonstrated in accomplishing his decree.”

**The 1689 Confession of Faith:** “All things come to pass unchangeably and certainly in relation to the foreknowledge and decree of God, who is the first cause. Thus, nothing happens to anyone *[or anything]* by chance or outside of God’s providence. Yet by the same providence God arranges all things to occur according to the nature of second causes, either necessarily, freely, or contingently.”

* **God Is the First Cause of All Things**

**Acts 17:28** “… ‘In him we live and move and have our being ...’”

**Acts 17:28 (**NASB) “… in Him we live and move and exist …”

All non-divine powers of operation and agency are *caused causes*.

**Isaiah 10:15** Shall the axe boast over him who hews with it, or the saw magnify itself against him who wields it? As if a rod should wield him who lifts it, or as if a staff should lift him who is not wood!

**Acts 17:28** “… ‘In him we live and move and have our being ...’”

* **Real “Second Causes”**

**The 1689 Confession of Faith:** “All things come to pass unchangeably and certainly in relation to the foreknowledge and decree of God, who is the first cause. Thus, nothing happens to anyone [or anything] by chance or outside of God’s providence. Yet by the same providence God arranges all things to occur according to the nature of second causes, either necessarily, freely, or contingently.”

God not only causes all causes to do *their* causing. He also causes them to do their causing *with respect to the kinds of things that they are*—according to the nature of the created thing.

* **Divine Concurrence Taught in Scripture**

**Acts 14:17** “… he [God] did not leave himself without witness, for he did good giving you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness.”

**Psalm 104:14** You [God] cause the grass to grow for the livestock and plants for man to cultivate, that he may bring forth food from the earth

**Philippians 2:12** (NASB) So then my beloved ... work out your salvation with fear and trembling

**Philippians 2:13** (NASB) for it is God who is at work in you both to will and to work for His good pleasure.

**Psalm 18:37-38** I [David] pursued my enemies and overtook them, and did not turn back till they were consumed ... they fell under my feet.

**Psalm 18:39** For you [God] equipped me with strength for the battle; you made those who rise against me sink under me.

God is the sovereign One, the first cause. And humans genuinely and truly are a second cause. God is not violating the nature of creatures when He causes them to move. God sets them in motion in harmony with their nature.

* **Different Intents**

**Exodus 7:3** “... I [God] will harden Pharaoh’s heart ...”

**Exodus 8:32** ... Pharaoh hardened his heart ...

**Genesis 45:5** (NASB) “Now do not be grieved or angry with yourselves because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life.”

**Genesis 50:20** (NASB) “As for you, you meant evil against me, *but* God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive.”

**Acts 2:23** “… Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.”

**Acts 4:27-28** “for truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place.”

**Exodus 21:12-13** “Whoever strikes a man so that he dies shall be put to death. But if he did not lie in wait for him, but God let him fall into his hand [unintentional act of manslaughter], then I will appoint for you a place to which he may flee.”

* **God's Freedom**

**The 1689 Confession of Faith:** “In his ordinary providence, God makes use of means [i.e. second causes], though he is free to work apart from them, beyond them, and contrary to them at his pleasure.”

* **God’s Sovereignty over All Aspects of Our Lives**

**Psalm 139:16**Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them.

**1 Samuel 2:6** “The LORD kills and brings to life ...”

**Deuteronomy 32:39**“See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god beside me; I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal; and there is none that can deliver out of my hand.”

**Exodus 4:11** Then the LORD said to him, “Who has made man's mouth? Who makes him mute, or deaf, or seeing, or blind? Is it not I, the LORD?”

**Job 14:5** “Since [man’s] days are determined, and the number of his months is with you [God], and you have appointed his limits that he cannot pass”

**Acts 17:26** “And [God] made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place”

**Acts 17:28** “… ‘In him we live and move and have our being…’”

* **Man’s Will**

“Libertarian Free Will” falsely claims humans are free, autonomous beings with the liberty and ability to do anything—rulers of our own lives, masters of our own destinies.

Know this: we do have a real will—we do have genuine desires from within ourselves, and we do make real choices that have real consequences.

* **Man’s Will Is Always Subject to God's Will**

**Proverbs 16:9** The heart of man plans his way, but the LORD establishes his steps.

**Proverbs 19:21** Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the LORD that will stand. (cf. Proverbs 16:1; Jeremiah 10:23; Proverbs 21:1)

**James 4:13-15** Come now, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit”—yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes. Instead you ought to say, “If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that.”

* **Man’s Will Is Seriously Affected by Sin**

**The 1689 Confession of Faith:** “Humanity in the state of innocence [before the fall] had freedom and power to will and to do what was good and well-pleasing to God. Yet this condition was unstable, so that humanity could fall from it.”

**The 1689 Confession of Faith:** “Humanity, by falling into a state of sin, has completely lost all ability to choose any spiritual good that accompanies salvation. Thus, people in their natural state are absolutely opposed to spiritual good and dead in sin, so that they cannot convert themselves by their own strength or prepare themselves for conversion.”

**Ephesians 2** says we are “… dead in trespasses and sins” (2:1), “… by nature children of wrath …” (2:3), and again in verse 5, before regeneration, we were “… dead in our trespasses ...”

**1 Corinthians 2:14** The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.

**Romans 3:10-12** … “None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one.”

**John 6:44** “No one *can* come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day.”

* **God’s Sovereignty in Salvation**

**John 3:3 & 5** … “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.” … “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.”

This means God has to cause a change in us; namely, He must cause us to be born again. And this “new birth” is something we cannot and do not cooperate in. We are *not* a second cause in the new birth. There is no will in us before God gives us new birth that longs for God or chooses to believe, so God acts upon us—He alone causes new birth.

**John 1:13** [Those given new birth] were born [*again*], not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

**John 6:63** “It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all ...”

**1 Peter 1:3** Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead

**Ephesians 2:8-9** For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

* **God’s Sovereignty in the Life of the Saved Living on This First Creation**

**1 John 1:8** If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

**Philippians 2:13** (NASB) for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

**Philippians 2:12** (NASB) So then my beloved ... work out your salvation with fear and trembling.

**1 Corinthians 15:10** But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me.

**Ephesians 2:10** For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

**John 3:27** … “A person cannot receive even one thing unless it is given him from heaven.”

**James 1:17** Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.

**James 1:22** ... be doers of the word, and not hearers only ...

* **In Closing**

**Charles Spurgeon:** “There is no attribute more comforting to His children than that of God’s Sovereignty. Under the most adverse circumstances, in the most severe trials, they believe that Sovereignty has ordained their afflictions, that Sovereignty overrules them, and that Sovereignty will sanctify them all. There is nothing for which the children ought more earnestly to contend than the doctrine of their Master over all creation—the Kingship of God over all the works of His own hands—the Throne of God and His right to sit upon that Throne.”

**Psalm 97:1** The LORD reigns, let the earth rejoice ...