

You said forget this one, but here are a couple of thoughts, and I would be glad to talk about this as much as you need in order to work through some of the issues. Talking about this is easier than writing....

I would recommend *The Other Side of Calvinism* by Vance, *Chosen but free* by Geisler, and I would whole heartedly recommend Geisler's *Systematic*. Baker's encyclopedia of apologetics has some great stuff as well.

Concerning "God's Sovereignty and Man's Free Will" and "how God is fully sovereign meaning in control and not just all-knowing"? It may help to state this not as and either/or, and not as one dependent upon the other, but rather as coextensive—existing concurrently, in tandem. For example, God knows what He predetermines, and He predetermines what He knows. This would change the statement to say, God is in sovereign control since He has always known everything that ever was, could be or would be—had potentiality—and only that which He predetermined to actualize moved out of the state of potentiality in to actuality; one of the things He determined to actualize is man, which came through direct creation. Moreover, the definition of "man" is that he *is* a free moral agent with *free will*. Hence, to remove man's free will is to change man into something other than a man. Just a caveat, this is not meant to say that God cannot do what He determines, according to His own nature, nor that Man's free will is unlimited. Further, knowing is not the same as forcing. To equate the two is a categorical fallacy.

Concerning God creating "men with fallen natures (everyone post-Adam)". This is better described as resulting from the process of "procreation" rather than direct creation. The significance of this, at a minimum, is that man inherits his sin nature not from God's creation but man's freely chosen rebellion. To describe this state of affairs in a way that minimizes man's choice and inevitable consequences, and base everything on God's "lacking" is to redefine God, which results in a "not God".

I do not believe that the position of "compatibleism" is the best understanding of man's freedom. Lucifer before the fall, did not have an internal inclination to sin—lest we ascribe sin to the direct creation of God—or external stimuli to tempt—lest we accuse God of tempting to sin, which He denies that He does (James 1:13).

Concerning God creating some people to be "vessels of wrath", this can be taken in two ways. One, God intentionally creates some who will never have the *opportunity* to be saved; hence, they come into existence irrevocably doomed, by their creator, to wrath—of course this is in line with Calvinism. The other, which I hold to, is that some people who will by the grace of God have *opportunity* to receive salvation because: God paid for their sin in the death of Christ, provided messengers to tell them of the good news, and sent the Holy Spirit to supernaturally convict men of their sinfulness, God's righteousness, and the coming judgment, which places man in a state to be able to actually choose—like Adam—to receive God's grace or reject it. That not all will choose to receive God's grace—if granted a *real* free choice, which Lucifer, fallen angels, Adam and Eve so lucidly demonstrate—did not stop God from creating man with that free

choice changes the dynamic to they were created with real choice to not be “vessels of wrath” but they would known to God when He created *mankind* choose to be vessels of wrath makes them created as vessels of wrath. Since God is all-knowing, He knew both their sovereignly created potentiality to receive or reject and their actual choice to be later experienced by them to reject, and yet, with no external forces coercing Him to create, He sovereignly chose to create mankind, thereby making these, by their God granted free choice “vessels of wrath”. Just the simple truth that they were created vessels of wrath does not explain why they are “vessels of wrath” Calvinism notwithstanding.

An example, albeit not a perfect one since it is impossible to use an analogy of the imperfect to *fully* reflect the perfect, might be. If you, the potter, chose to make one-hundred clay pots, even though you knew that because of the nature of clay and the equipment, some of them would be flawed and thereby subject to being rejected does not mean that you created a *certain* pot for destruction.

I hope this helps some; although, I know that this brief response lacks refinement and answering all of the follow-up....

Typed but not proofread
Indebted
Ronnie W Rogers
