

Nothing is self-caused

If you think you caused yourself to become a Christian, or do good, or do evil, you have another think coming. Nothing is self-caused. Your decision to act on your desires might be the “immediate” cause of your actions, but your desires themselves are not self-caused. Our current desires were caused by a bewildering variety of prior thoughts and events which have combined to shape our wills.

If you back up the entire chain of events which have combined to create the uniqueness of your thoughts and desires, you arrive at the first cause of everything, which is God. Because God is good, everything He causes to happen, including all of the smart and stupid decisions you make in life must at some level have a good purpose.

Most Evangelical Christians, except for the Calvinists, believe that your actions are self-caused, thereby making you deserving of eternal punishment in Hell, unless you are saved by Christ. If it is true, however, that God is the first cause of everything that happens, including whether or not you decide to receive Christ, it would follow that you should not be held ultimately responsible for your actions. It would make no sense at all for God to punish you eternally for sins that He caused you to commit.

According to the Bible, the chastisements of God are not eternal and their purpose is not retribution. The literal definition of the Greek word “aionios” (commonly mistranslated “eternal”) is “temporary” or “pertaining to an age or succession of ages.” It does not mean “unending.” God chastises those whom He loves. The purpose of those chastisements is to mold you into the likeness of Christ and teach you to empathize with the misfortunes of others and love them unconditionally, as He does. God loves His enemies, including you, and returns good for evil.

So, why did God cause all this evil to exist in the first place? Why didn't He just prevent it all from happening? Well? Good has no meaning unless contrasted with evil. Light has no meaning unless contrasted with darkness. Joy has no meaning unless contrasted with sadness. Love has no meaning unless contrasted with hate. Sacrificial (Agape) love is not possible unless sacrifice is needed. You cannot possibly become like Christ unless you first experience what is like to be a sinner. In order to fully appreciate being made alive in Christ, you first must experience being dead in your sins.

Your decision to become a Christian was not self-caused. It was caused by God who indwells you with His Holy Spirit, gradually molding you into His own likeness.