

**Is
This
A God Of
Love?**

A.E. Wilder-Smith

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Petra Wilder-Smith***

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"The tortures occur. If they are unnecessary, then there is no God or a bad one. If there is a good God, then these tortures are necessary."

C. S. Lewis

Chapter I

The Pink Professor

When I was a student of natural sciences in England, some of our lectures were given by a professor who had marked leftist tendencies. His lectures at the university were the poorest we ever endured. He'd bring a load of scientific journals into the lecture hall, open them, apparently at random, and then just talk. But he was a gentleman and was kind, in his reserved way, to all of us.

A complete transformation took place in the evenings when he went into town and stood on a soapbox to harangue the masses with the verve and skill of the

convinced revolutionary. He was nobly rewarded by his leftist political friends when they gained control of the country, for he soon became a peer, with the title of "lord," and was appointed an important administrator of a big university.

This professor was, in common with many Marxist theorists, a convinced and militant atheist. One day he came into the laboratory, unnoticed by me, as I was talking to another student about things other than purely materialistic science. I remarked that, not surprisingly, the study of matter would probably yield information only about matter. Trans-material matters might exist, but they would be overlooked by such methods. One could not expect to pick up ultraviolet light with a film sensitive only to infrared light. But even if infrared paper showed nothing that would not prove that no ultraviolet wave-lengths existed. I saw no reason not to believe in God merely because our instruments had not detected him. Perhaps they were not on the same wave-length.

Overhearing these remarks, our professor exploded. "It really is a mystery to me," he said, "how otherwise intelligent people can say they believe in any god, let alone in a good and wise one, whom they call a person. We can explain the whole universe and all of life without resorting to the outdated and unnecessary postulate of a god behind it all. Chance and long time spans will do all that your theologians imagine he did without ever appealing to such nonsense as the 'Old Man in the Skies.'"

He continued: "It really is beyond my comprehension that intelligent people today could still be taken in by the same old drivel. I can understand cannibals in the jungle talking as you do. But not a student of the natural sciences in the twentieth century. It is bad enough to have people believing theoretically in a god behind things. But you people are much worse. You believe you have a personal sort of friendship with this god of yours and think you will therefore get preferential treatment from him. I can understand,

perhaps, some old people saying they believe in some sort of mysterious spirit when they see a sunrise, a beautiful face, a rose or an orchid. But it is proof of positive lack in intelligence on the part of those same people when they do not take the time to see the other side of the coin. They have not the courage to see the other side and boldly throw out their mythical gods — the cowards!”

Having switched into his soapbox mood, our professor was in dead earnest — and angry! “People must be lacking in I.Q. if they do not see the other side of the picture which wipes out all the sunset and beauty stuff.” He continued by talking about the cat stalking the mouse and playing with it, letting it totter away half dead and then grabbing it again at the last minute in its horrible claws. Then, when the poor mouse did not have the strength to provide any more fun for the cat, it would squeeze the life out of its tattered body, biting its head off with a juicy crunch, and purring with delight at the evening’s entertainment. “It is marvellous

that your intelligent, almighty, all-loving and kind god prepared both the mouse in its helplessness and the cat with its talon strength and cruel mentality. This is a beautiful proof of the goodness of your god," he said, with a look of profound scorn in my direction.

I shrank into my corner of the laboratory, but he had not finished with me. "What about the young mother dying of cancer, her body stinking of decay before they take the baby from her and put her in her coffin? Is that your proof of the great Creator who made all things well — all things bright and beautiful? The Lord God made them all," he hissed. "And what about your capitalists who have worn down the working masses for centuries and built your churches to help you do it? We are going to alter all that — and quickly, believe me!"

"What disgusts me," he said, "is the rank hypocrisy of it all." After a pause to regain his poise, he added, "What about all the agony — the agony of the father and children left behind when they bury the

mother? What about the lifetimes of hunger suffered by the poor in India and Russia? Did your good god create all that as well as the sunrises and the laughing faces?" Looking grimly at me, he leaned across the table and said slowly, "Because, if he did — if he did make the disgusting, the cruel and the nauseating, as well as the beautiful — then I, for one, would believe him to be a devil and not a god. Only a devil could make the apparently beautiful and then mock us all with the anguish of the disgusting. But, as I am not so medieval as to believe either in devils or gods, for that matter, I regard the whole argument as a pure wanton waste of time, not worthy of mention in a scientific laboratory."

Having unburdened his soul, he regained some of his professorial aplomb and smilingly looked around for any answers that might be forthcoming. I mumbled something to the effect that his was only one side of the question. Other great people had no difficulty in maintaining an entirely opposite view.

“Let us leave out the question of wars and suffering caused by man himself,” he said. “We might explain problems caused by man directly as due to his not being evolved far enough away from his animal ancestors. If we wait long enough, he will evolve higher and get better. Let us leave that and look at another field to which no one has ever honestly turned with a reply that was satisfactory to me. What about the refinement of torture we see all around us which has nothing whatever to do with man’s nature? Take the designed torture we can all see in the transmission of the malarial parasite. It shows signs of what looks like careful, thoughtful planning with the single purpose of plaguing and torturing the host animal, or man. To me the whole system looks like a remarkable sort of planning, if a good god worked it all out. As I said before, if you want a plan behind the universe and life, this sort of setup and planning seems to show a good and a bad, a kindly and a vindictive planner all in one — a god who is a devil.”

Musing, he continued, "No, I just cannot believe this religious stuff myself. It really is just too ridiculous. My intelligence and my common sense force me to reject the whole bag of nonsense. I am near enough to being a nihilist, you tell me. But I should become an absolute nihilist if I were to force myself to believe in a god who is a devil. An almighty god, such as you believe in, and a good god, just could not show so many evidences of what appear to be thoughtful, planned goodness, such as sunrises and other beauties, and at the same time so many signs of cold, calculated, intelligent, sadism. If you were able to develop sufficient logic," he said, scornfully addressing himself directly to me, "you would have recognized long ago that your views lead directly to nihilism. Can you imagine any supreme, almighty, personal being, who was at the same time all-wise and all-good and yet frightfully vindictive and bad, planning all sorts of plagues and diseases as well as the beauty of the rising sun and

the healthy body? It just does not make sense. It is plain bunk." He turned from me in contempt.

There was quiet for a short while. Then he began once more: "Of course, you people always try to get around the difficulty by actually assuming a devil, who surprised the all-knowing and all-powerful, almighty one by upsetting his apple cart when he was not looking. I suppose you attribute the disease, cancer, war, exploitation of the workers, and all the rest of this world's woes to a devil, do you not? But do you not realize that if god were almighty and good, wishing us — the so-called creatures of his hand — well, he must have neutralized the machinations of your devil before he got to work with his hosts of wicked angels in which you, no doubt, believe? Then the devil could not have been a source of devilry, could he? Of course, if your god is not almighty with respect to the devil, then there is only one thing to say about him: he is not god at all any more. So you destroy him this way if you do not destroy him the other way. If

god cannot get even with the devil, then the devil must be god too; and we are once more reduced to the primitive ideas of warring gods and devils in heaven and hell. You are not suggesting that we revert to ideas like that, are you? They held up intellectual progress and emancipation for centuries. I shall consider you an enemy of all true progress if you have the effrontery to inform me in a scientific laboratory that you believe in that sort of trash," he said, looking hard at me.

I am afraid most of us were rather like the proverbial rabbit when confronted by the snake — transfixed. No answers seemed to be able to formulate themselves in our brains. After all, our professor was a learned man. He was not just repeating slogans learned in Marxist circles. Obviously he was thoroughly convinced of his views. His extreme seriousness made him willing to stand up on a soapbox and confront the mob — an act which must have been rather humiliating for a professor of his standing. Although he was almost useless as a professor and lecturer

in the classroom and experimental laboratory, we respected him as a man, even though not all of us liked his convictions on political or religious matters.

While we were thinking about these things, he quietly started again. "I used to say," he continued, "that I was an agnostic and therefore could say nothing for certain about religious matters. But now that I am getting more mature and experienced, I have come to the conclusion that I am in reality a total atheist. I have been forced to the point where I do not believe in any god, either good or bad. That is, I believe neither in a good god nor in a bad devil. Such beliefs raise more difficulties than they remove. They just complicate matters. So, today, I just leave religious matters outside my realm of thought — like alchemy. And I do not like people raising them in the classroom either. They only confuse, being highly unscientific and subjective. I do not need to blur my intellectual horizon with such primitive methods of thought any longer. The Marxists are not altogether wrong when they

call religion "opium for the people." It is just that; it muddles their thoughts, blurs their vision and, because they can see clearly no more, renders them an easy prey for the capitalists who are just waiting to exploit them for their own benefit."

The Spokesman Of Many Thinking People

I have never forgotten that afternoon in the laboratory. Certainly our professor had thought more about these matters than we students had. Moreover, he understood the problems of the ordinary thinking men and, when he wished, could be an excellent spokesman for them. Because he understood them, he could sway them when he spoke. He never spoke with such conviction on cold, matter-of-fact chemical matters, but no one could get across ideas like he when revolution and Marxism came up. His attitudes are still typical of many university professors all over the West. Since the total collapse of Marxism behind the former iron curtain there are many professors in the East who

have abandoned the views of our pink professor for the simple reason that they work neither economically nor socially.

The subject raised that afternoon in the laboratory is the very question occupying the minds of many thinking people in the West today. It looms large in the life of the person who, though satiated with life's material goods and apparently concerned only with pleasure and prosperity, is brought face to face with life's cruelties and suffering every day in his newspaper and on radio and television news, and is jolted by what is happening around him in his own life. If God is almighty — and if he is God, he must be almighty — why doesn't he stop all this chaos, all these wars, all the unrighteousness, injustice, misery and suffering in this world? Why did he ever let them start? Mere men everywhere are bending all their efforts to do what they can to stop it all. But, fortunately or unfortunately, men are not almighty and therefore cannot reach their goal.

Years ago, a student friend crippled with polio told me, "If you want me to believe in your God, I shall expect him first of all to make a better job of the world we live in — and of me." I spent a good deal of time with him and he was apparently glad to listen to me. In my student enthusiasm I explained not only the Christian way of salvation by Christ's works, but also the intricacies of prophecy and the end of the age. Afterward he turned to me and said that now that he knew the way, he didn't need to do anything about it. For, when he saw the end coming, he would quickly accept God's way and be all right forever! A year or two later he was stricken with a stroke one Sunday morning while shaving. He died in seconds, without a sound. His wife found him an hour or so later.

If God loves us men and women, as the Bible assumes he does, why doesn't he end all misery and immediately set up a workable, orderly system such as most people of good will would like and for which they are striving? Doesn't he care for us any longer? If he doesn't care and

has forgotten us, why should we care about him? Because he has allowed evil to exist along with good, thus apparently compromising himself in his omnipotence, many thinking people despair of an answer, or become atheists, just as my professor had done.

The Problem Is Not New

Before further consideration of this question, we must remind ourselves that it is by no means new. Some have the mistaken idea that they are very modern if they handle the question as my professor did. They think that it stamps them as being advanced thinkers in having recognized that mankind is facing a new problem — and that they have solved it in a particularly new way.

Of course, this is not the case. When thistles and thorns sprang up after mankind's first couple had fallen from the paradise of God by disobedience, they probably asked the same sort of question. Why indeed did God allow all this? Does he no longer love us and care for us? It

looks as if he does not, for the very ground we cultivate does not bring forth its harvest any more. The birth of Cain was probably accomplished by pain, which was capped when he became his brother's murderer. How can that grisly history coincide with God's goodness and omnipotence?

Job could have asked the same kind of questions when the messengers came to him, one after another, each reporting a worse catastrophe to his family. It got so bad that Job cursed the day he had been born. He lost everything, including his health. Even his wife deserted him, telling him to curse God and die. How could Job believe in a holy, perfect and omnipotent God, concerned about him and his family, when all the catastrophes about him pointed in the opposite direction? He is God. He could have stopped it if he had wanted to. Did he want to find a way out for Job? And, if not, was he a sadist? Did he still care about Job in allowing all this to happen to the poor innocent man? The testimony of God and man was that Job

was perfect — and innocent. Yet it all happened, and no explanation was forthcoming — except that good Job praised God for having given and then taken away again. No real answer was forthcoming until right at the end of the book. If God did not care about poor, innocent, perfect Job, why should Job love God? Of course God cared for Job in a way which had never occurred to Job. God justified Job before all heaven by demonstrating Job's steadfastness under duress.

It is true, of course, that there was still a great deal in Job and Adam's worlds which pointed to God's care in spite of thorns and thistles and catastrophes. But it is also true that there is just as much in our world. At the beginning of Adam's career the picture pointing to God's care and love was clear. In that earlier world, everything indicated only God's care and omnipotence. Many things now pointed away from this direction, and the area of God's order had retreated into quite a minute spot on the stage of life. So the same sort of contradictions arose in Adam

and Job's times as they do now. Thus, the problem is by no means new. It is as old as mankind.

Accordingly, the question presents itself as follows: "Why should we be asked to believe and trust in a good God, thereby flying in the face of all — or at least a good deal of — the contemporary evidence?" One physicist put it as follows: "Why does God value faith in him so much as to make it the very condition, according to the Christian way of life, of entry into his kingdom? It seems most unfair to me. For faith means believing right in the face of contradictory evidence. Faith, to me, is merely the result of forcing myself to believe and trust in God's goodness and care when a goodly part of the evidence on hand leads me to reject such a trust. Most preachers seem to preach faith as though it were the faculty of believing something which is not true — forcing oneself to believe and act in spite of evidence to the contrary. Why should God value a faith which acts against all common sense and evidence? Such action short-circuits one

of our highest faculties: the ability to weigh evidence and then act on it. Faith believes what it cannot see; it accepts evidence it cannot weigh. Why should God make as a condition for entering his presence and kingdom our ability to short circuit, abuse and render null and void the very logic and evidence-weighing faculty with which the Bible says he endowed us? God gave us logical ability. Why does he demand that we act and think illogically in faith as a condition of entering his kingdom?"

To return to our first line of approach to this problem, then, the question is: if the same Being planned both the good and the bad, the beautiful and the ugly, the sadistic and the loving, then all serious, logical, reasoning thought about him becomes impossible with our thinking faculties.

Another Approach

What does the Bible teach about this apparent state of illogic? Remarkably enough, neither the New nor the Old

Testament sees any illogic in the situation! For example, in Romans 1, which deals with this question in detail, Paul the apostle teaches in a clear and uncompromising manner that creation doesn't show the slightest sign of contradiction in these matters. It gives only one plain line of thought: that the whole creation reveals that God is a glorious, omnipotent Creator — and nothing else. Paul says, "Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God has shown it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made (nature), even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse."¹

Thus, the Bible teaches, as do many ancient sources, that when a man regards nature, he is seeing, as in a mirror, the Creator. The Bible doesn't ignore the apparent problems of war, disease, poverty, pain and chaos. It says quite a lot about these subjects and even suggests cures for some of them. But it does not see them

in the light in which my professor saw them. The Bible does not think that these things cloud the issue about the Creator, as do many thinking people. Rather, it teaches that the person who regards nature as it is today and does not see the power of a glorious, invisible Godhead in nature — with no clouding of the issue by the mixture of good and evil we all see — that person is “without excuse” for not believing! This is surely a rather strong pill to the modern intellectual who pleads intellectual difficulties for his disbelief in God.

Adding insult to injury, the Bible goes one step further in teaching that not only should a person see the Godhead, the glorious Creator, when he sees mixed nature, but, seeing it, he should be filled with thanks to God, glorifying him for revealing his wisdom and power in the creation. So, apparently I should have told my professor that he was not only “without excuse” but also a “thankless” person — if I had been ready to give him a biblical view of himself. Somehow, I don’t think he

would have appreciated that! Certainly, at that time I did not have the necessary maturity to say such a thing without causing a major incident, and a lot of misunderstanding.

Paul continues the argument by maintaining that a sense of wonder and reverence should fill every observer of the present confused creation. Offsetting this wonder should be a sense of our own vanity and foolishness, pervading us and all who do not see the creation in this light. Finally, all these feelings on observing God's handiwork should make the observer a "worshipper." If I had told my professor that he had all the evidence necessary to make him fall on his knees and worship God, undoubtedly he would have thought me a lunatic.

But Paul insists that if those reactions to the creation don't take place in us, we are abusing our reasoning powers. As a consequence of this abuse we shall become totally unable, in the course of time, to use our higher reasoning faculties and logical powers. Paul expresses this

thought by saying our "heart" will become "darkened" and our "imagination" will become "vain." Also, he maintains that, under such circumstances, even sexual morality will die in us. Men will begin to sexually abuse their own bodies — homosexuality will arise, and normal sex relations will be stifled. Certainly my professor would not have appreciated this step of the argument in the least, for he appeared to be a moral man.

In summary, at least parts of Holy Scripture do not appear to sympathize greatly with the intellectual difficulties discussed here. The Bible says a look at nature should be enough to make a person a convinced, thankful, worshiping believer. The question remains: why does the Bible take this stand, seeing that at least some thoughtful modern people in the western world today have found that the observation of the universe has by no means made them worshippers or believers. (Here I am not thinking of Taoists, etc.). On the contrary, those who have studied the universe in the natural sci-

ences and other disciplines have often experienced the most difficulties with respect to worshipping and believing. Indeed, quite a majority have simply turned away from any thought of God.

Investigation of "that which is seen" has not revealed to them the "unseen" but has often turned them from believing in anything divine and invisible. In no way has it made them worshippers of some unseen Being. For what they have perceived shows so many paradoxes and apparent contradictions that, judging the unseen by their perception, it becomes either ridiculous or superfluous for further serious thought.

Some intellectuals conclude that if the seen can give no credible picture of the unseen, being a Christian is synonymous with being a third-rate intellectual. They assume that the Christian is intellectually incapable of comprehending the contradictions and paradoxes inherent in the allegedly rather naive and intellectually impossible Christian faith.

Clearly, the basic difficulty confronting both the Christian and the intellectual in aligning matters of belief with matters of the intellect is intimately tied up with the question of the origin of evil. If we could account for the origin of evil without impugning God's omnipotence, love and holiness, then we would be able to go a long way toward solving these difficulties. A future chapter deals with this basic problem of the origin of evil.

Chapter II

Thought and Action: Today and Yesterday

Few realize how differently people today use the process of thinking as compared to individuals of a hundred years ago. We live in an age of unprecedented technology and, therefore, of technological thought, so of necessity technological subject matter must color today's thought processes more than in the past. However, beyond a mere change of shades of thought, entirely new thought processes

or modes have been adopted. Radical changes in the very mechanism of thought have occurred.

A century ago the average thinking person considered life and the universe to be orderly and contain meaning. He willingly admitted that it was often difficult to discover the meaning and order behind things. But this fact did not disturb him in his basis of thought, namely, that order and meaning were there if he could only find them. Though human stupidity or weakness might distort and slow down the unraveling of meaning, the meaning was still there. The book of the universe and of life was hard to decode or read. But the average thinker was still convinced that it was a code capable of being deciphered if sufficient insight and intelligence could be brought to bear on it.

Based on such premises, huge efforts were easily justified in the quest to decipher the mysteries of the meaning and mechanisms of life and the universe. The overrun from this conviction can be seen today in the momentum still present in

such efforts as molecular biology and space exploration, where laws, interpretation and meaning are being sought. However, it is not generally recognized that large areas of today's philosophy, art, music, general culture and even theology have abandoned the very premises which launched the huge scientific effort which has utterly changed the whole world of technology and science. Most practicing research scientists still work on the premise that nature is a code, and that life is a meaningful system governed by law and yielding its meaning to those who try hard and with enough intelligence. But other branches of knowledge such as those mentioned above have more or less arrived at the conclusion that life and the universe are, in the last analysis, absurd and devoid of meaning. Camus is an example of this, for he received the Nobel Prize for saying just this in his own elegant way.

Thus, where our forefathers based their thought processes on the premise that life and the universe were meaning-

ful, thought processes today are governed by exactly the opposite premise. Sartre, Camus and other modern thinkers have obtained the highest praise from today's intelligentsia for elegantly and cleverly conveying the premise that life, man and the universe are meaningless. It naturally follows, therefore, that suffering is meaningless too.

Only in such a cultural atmosphere were scientific theories as those of Darwin able to take root and flourish both in scientific and popular circles. For Darwin, aided by Huxley, propagated the view, using mountains of scientific detail as evidence, that all life processes arose spontaneously, without motivation or rationale, from randomness. In the last analysis, randomness is congruent with lack of order and, therefore, with lack of meaning. According to this view, the mixtures of amino acids which are supposed to have given spontaneous birth to life showed no meaning or motivation behind them. No volition guided these and other building blocks into the codes of meaning

which make up DNA as we know it today. The first nucleic acids and proteins allegedly arose spontaneously from meaninglessness. This boils down to saying that if there is any meaning in life or its origin at all, that meaning must be based on sheer meaninglessness. The same applies to life's destiny — it must be meaningless too.

Equating Fact To Non-Fact

Thus biological sciences are also mixed up in the changes in thought processes which have so radically altered the modern world. Consider the lengths to which scientific philosophers such as Sir Julian Huxley have gone. He teaches all who will listen that human and social order flourish better if humans believe in a god or support some sort of religion, for their belief helps them respect each other. Therefore, he advocates the propagation of some sort of belief in a god external to nature, even though he says that we, the enlightened ones, well know that such a belief does not correspond to the actual

facts of nature, but is thoroughly false and deceptive. "Religion today is imprisoned in a theistic frame of ideas," he claims, "compelled to operate in the unrealities of the dualistic world. In the unitary humanistic frame it acquires a new look and new freedoms. With the aid of our new vision it has the opportunity of escaping from the theistic impasse and of playing its proper role in the real world of unitary existence."¹

Schaeffer rightly observes: "Now it may be true that it can be shown by observation that society copes better with life through believing that there is a god. But in that case, surely optimistic humanism is being essentially unreasonable... if, in order to be optimistic, it rests upon the necessity of mankind believing and functioning upon a lie."

In other words, human society demonstrably needs to believe in a god to function optimally. "All right," says today's scientific philosopher, "let them carry on with that belief if it helps them function, even though, strictly speaking, it is a lie."

Huxley has no objection to believing in "anti-facts" if that allows man to continue being optimistically humanist.

Consider the chaos implicit in this kind of thought pattern. Huxley is a scientific humanist who believes in "unitary existence" — no divine existence outside human existence. This means that there is no thought (Descartes' proof of existence) besides human (or possibly animal) thought. Yet, the human thought he uses is calmly allowed to be non-thought, for there is no objection to holding a non-god to be a real god!

Surely everyone, including the rationalist, believes that man is a rational being, and that rationality is a part — an integral part — of every man. To postulate that man, in order to function, must be non-rational, will divide and destroy his very being. This is the position to which scientific philosophy in some quarters — and they are influential quarters — has led us. Not only is this the main line in present-day intellectual thought, postulated by gifted intellectuals like Huxley,

Camus and Sartre, but Fellini and Antonioni of Italy, Slessinger of England and Bergman of Sweden all actively proclaim the same "irrational rationalism" in their films. Thus, the view that life is meaningless is not merely the property of the highbrows but is being claimed by so-called lowbrows too. Popular mass education is seeing to this. Nobel prizes are doled out to those who are responsible for teachings that are destroying rational man!

How Faith Is Gained

How can one get a man to believe in a non-fact in the same way that our fathers believed in demonstrable facts? That is the grand feat which modern thought has now accomplished with Kierkegaard's aid. A new methodology was developed especially for this one purpose — how to believe in and be convinced of non-facts and make them the basis of our faith.

The pattern is quite simple. If a man can see no rational rhyme, sense nor reason in life and its problems, if he cannot find any way of decoding life's

mysteries, then he must no longer seek solutions by rational thought. He must close his eyes, throw life's textbook into the corner, and take a "leap of faith" based on non-facts. Thus non-facts are serving the purpose formerly monopolized by facts as a foundation for thought and faith. Theology professors have faith in faith rather than faith in a fact or a person.

It is vitally important to realize how different this method of thought is, as compared to that employed by the prophets throughout Holy Scripture. In the Acts of the Apostles,² Paul is reported to have reasoned with the elders with tears day and night about matters of faith. He was ready to throw his faith overboard if it did not comply with the known facts. If the body of the Lord Jesus Christ could have been found after his death and resurrection, that one fact would have abolished at one stroke all Christian faith and doctrine forever. For the whole Christian position (faith) turned (and turns) on this one outstanding fact — the Lord rose from the dead as he had promised before his death.

His body was transmuted from material mortality to the supramortal — to immortality. The disproving of this one central fact — the pillar of faith which was attested to by more than five hundred living people at the time Paul wrote of the resurrection — would have destroyed Christianity.

In those days Christians did not arrive at their faith by a leap in the dark, but by basing their thought processes — and therefore their faith — on the fact of Christ's resurrection. Any other way of arriving at a real Christian faith stands forever outside the testimony of Scripture as well as that of living Christians.

The Exasperated Student

I once knew a student who disliked higher mathematics, yet needed this knowledge to pass examinations. After many futile attempts to master a chapter of a rather abstruse aspect of the subject, he threw the book into the corner of his room, muttering that it was all bunk and nonsense — to him. But it was not non-

sense to everyone. For others had mastered the same contents and extracted meaning from them. The difficulty was that the student, being unable to comprehend the message of the abstruse chapter, concluded that it was absurd nonsense. His conclusion was, unfortunately for him, wrong.

Camus and others are saying, in effect, the same thing — life is absurd and meaningless — to them. But other serious people, although usually the first to admit that life's book is hard to decipher, confess to having found satisfying solutions to at least some of life's problems. And their conclusions are based on the facts given by events of history such as the resurrection of Christ. And more and more problems and seeming paradoxes may be resolved into order by the careful and logical application of thought.

The Age Of Reason

Our much-prized age of reason has regressed into an age of non-reason. The age of scientific philosophy has reverted to

an age of non or anti-philosophy. What else can we conclude if leaders of modern thought say that they're willing to believe in the existence of a god who they really don't think exists, in order to hold onto their optimistic humanism? Learning and philosophy are dependent upon the communication of meaning and message. Is it any wonder that communication between man and man, generation and generation, is breaking down because the message of the communication allegedly has been found to be meaningless? In this way philosophy today has become, in fact, an anti-philosophy, just as the age of reason has become an age of unreasonable blind leaps of faith in a pitch black, unreasonable and absurd world — of the kind described by Camus.

The whole situation as seen by our present world philosophy can be well summed up in these lines by Hans Arp, one of the original members of the Dada group:

The head downward
the legs upward
he tumbles into the bottomless
from whence he came

like a dish covered with hair
like a four-legged sucking chair
like a deaf echo trunk
half full half empty

the head downward
the legs upward
he tumbles into the bottomless
from whence he came

Francis Schaeffer comments: "On the basis of modern man's methodology, whether expressed in philosophy, art, literature or theology, there can be no other ending than this — man tumbles into the bottomless."³

Picasso In Chicago

Several years ago I was standing in front of the Civic Center in Chicago, where stands a huge abstract sculpture by

Picasso, for which the mayor of Chicago paid a large sum of money. While I was determining from which angles it would be best to photograph this piece of art, a well-mannered Chicagoan quietly asked why I was going to all this trouble. I said I wanted to get the effect and meaning in real life faithfully reproduced on film. His answer was quite interesting. He said that since in his opinion the work carried and expressed no communicable meaning in real life, it was a waste of time and good film to try and reproduce it in a photo!

Atheistic Clergymen

Picasso again demonstrates the tendency of modern art to detach itself from the realities and facts of modern life and, in doing so, to lose meaning for many people. Theology, the proverbial laggard in modern intellectual activity, has followed philosophy, art and music, albeit at a distance of some years.

I spoke to a young German clergyman recently, just before he was to conduct a confirmation service. In all earnestness

he informed me that he, as a pastor, believed that there was no God behind the universe, although he would not yet dare to say so openly in his church. He believed in an atheistic theology. Theology being the science of the study of divinity or God, we have arrived at the position of a pastor studying the science of no-God, which we may equate to nothingness, for a god that does not exist is nothing. So the conclusion was that he had spent seven years studying nothingness! I pointed out this rather elementary fact to him. He retreated in some confusion, saying that I had misunderstood him. He did not say, he explained, that he believed in an atheistic theology, but rather in an a-theistic theology. This was quite different, he said, for it meant that he could continue in his theology without God — that is, a-theistically rather than atheistically! One wonders what sort of a shepherd of his flock such a young man will make when he has to comfort the dying and lay hands on the sick and those wracked with pain.

Consequences

But why bother to go into all this theory and philosophy? If there is no meaning behind the universe and life, why try to find any?

The reason is simple. Man is a rational being. To ask him to live in and for meaninglessness or non-rationality is to ask him to destroy himself. He goes into despair and will not rest, if he is honest with himself, until he is able to replace meaninglessness with meaning and order.

If contemporary rational thinkers — being rational creatures — see injustice, suffering, wars, violence and apparent meaninglessness on every side, they cannot rest until they have found a rationale of some sort for it all. Huxley admits that he is prepared to be an optimistic humanist on the basis of believing in a non-existent god — one he knows not to be there, but whose presence and existence we must postulate to keep ourselves happy.

But the use of a non-rationality, a lie, to keep a man rational and happy will surely destroy the very basis of rationality!

No, if rational man is to remain rational, he must use "real" fact to find some meaning for all the apparent chaos and meaninglessness which surround him. How can he rationally explain a beautiful young mother dying of cancer while her child is being born? How can he avoid despair on seeing men, women and children mutilated by war, hunger and pestilence? These are realities. Camus shrugged his shoulders at such sights, sensitive as he was, and said that the world and life are meaningless jokes — absurd.

Jesus Christ saw similar suffering and spoke of the beggar Lazarus covered with sores and lying at the rich man's gate. He had mercy and compassion on the beggar. But he did not leave it at that and shrug it all off, just as if life and Lazarus were meaningless victims of a harsh, absurd and cruel world. He interpreted Lazarus' apparently meaningless suffer-

ing—and the rich man's riches too—and told us in no uncertain terms in Luke 16:20-25 what they meant.

But today's teachers of Christianity have not given convincing answers to the modern "meaningless" theorists, even though Christ's interpretation of the problem is on hand if they care to read and digest it. The fact is, of course, that Christ's interpretation of Lazarus' suffering and of other problems involving suffering is not generally accepted today. The real reason for the unwillingness to accept his interpretation is coupled with an unwillingness to accept the full fact and impact of resurrection as evidenced in Christ's own body. If we really believed in Christ's and our own resurrection as unshakable facts, we wouldn't have the slightest difficulty in accepting Christ's interpretation of the "mystery" or the apparent "meaninglessness" of Lazarus' suffering. We have become so used to equating non-fact with fact that we find it difficult to follow rigidly the logical consequences of believing in a real fact! For, in Lazarus' case, the intro-

duction of one overlooked fact, namely, personal resurrection, reduced the hopelessness and meaninglessness of his sufferings to meaningfulness.

Christ, as he explained Lazarus' case, kept steadily before him the fact of personal resurrection. To the humanist bystander, tied up in Huxley's idea about "unitary existence," Lazarus as he lay there full of sores was a senseless cruelty, an example of callous torture of innocent humanity. But if the promise of recompense and correction — actually, the mighty recompense of resurrection — is a fact, then, of course, meaninglessness resolves itself to meaning. For surely, if a short term of suffering is the method by which eternal non-suffering or bliss is to be attained, then Lazarus was in for a bargain — to put it mildly — and reasonableness is restored to apparent unreasonableness.

What modern philosophers have been busy doing — indeed philosophers of all time have practiced the same art — is removing by unbelief certain facts from

the sad case of this suffering world, facts given us by God himself to enable us to handle the problem intellectually. Just as the addition of an overlooked fact (resurrection) brought meaning into the meaninglessness in the case of Lazarus' suffering, so the removal of some fact will reduce it from rationality and meaning to irrationality and meaninglessness. We interpret and diagnose on the basis of all the facts of a case, that is, we appoint meaning in the light of all relevant facts. But, remove the facts, even the revealed facts of the Bible, and meaninglessness and inability to diagnose the case must result because the resulting picture is incomplete.

Man Cannot Live Without Rationality

It is obviously useless to argue reasonably with anyone who does not believe in meaning, and, therefore, in reason. Many modern theologians and philosophers are in just this position. But this is not the case with a majority of the younger generation. Young people, perhaps firm believers in Camus and Sartre, are finding

that they cannot help falling in love with one another, just as their forefathers did. Girls are still pretty and boys still attracted to their beauty of body and psyche. They become aware that the remarkable fact of falling in love with each other, in spite of what they have learned about the absurdity of everything, is not so absurd. Love is a new, hitherto neglected fact and it transforms their lives, giving them purpose where they had imagined there was none. The addition of one fact — human love is a fact and not a non-fact — to their lives has resolved some of life's meaninglessness to meaning.

The fact of love had been overlooked, but now it must be taken into account in the formula for life, just as in the case of Lazarus the resurrection completely altered the equation. The fact of love brings new rationality and new meaning, just as other facts — beauty in nature, order in the biological cell, chemical laws in biochemistry and electromagnetic laws in

valency help us to see order where previously, without knowledge of these facts, meaninglessness reigned.

Is There A Place For "Blind Faith"?

Someone will be sure to object to this kind of presentation, saying that, after all, the heavy emphasis on reason and rationality excludes the exercise of real faith as the evidence of things not seen but hoped for.

This kind of objection would be valid if one believed that reason is faith. But we have not said that. We have said that evidence and facts should lead to faith and that non-facts should not. To build faith on a sound basis we must have sound facts and not flabby non-facts or meaninglessness. When the facts of a case have been established beyond doubt, for example, that Christ did, as an historical fact, rise from the dead on the third day, then we can start building faith on that fact. For, by being resurrected after death, as he had promised before dying, he proved that he had knowledge which

ordinary mortals do not possess about the after-death state. In fact, the predicted and fulfilled resurrection proves that he had divine foreknowledge, and his words bore the weight attributable to divinity. If his words on resurrection have thus been proved to be divine, then surely what he says about me, my death and my resurrection by his power will be divine. These divine facts and words allow me sufficient basis on which to build my faith by trusting in and acting on them. This kind of building on divine evidence and facts, this trusting of them and their author, is nothing less and nothing more than biblical faith.

All that this really means is that we are objecting to "blind" faith—leaps in the dark. I am well aware that at times I have no facts or evidence to build upon—probably as Lazarus had no evidence as he lay in misery. I am completely at sea in regard to faith and belief in those difficult situations when I do not know where I am nor what I should do or think. And I am often in that anguished position.

But it is when I am in such deep waters that I take a new look at the facts of divine illumination, help and guidance which I have previously experienced. Looking back, I see how God has kept his good hand over me, even in allowing apparent catastrophes. Recalling past facts and evidence, I base my faith for the future on them and so reestablish trust for the present where I cannot yet see the needed evidence. But I cannot base trust on nothing, meaninglessness or nothingness. I cannot leap in the dark. I trusted him in the past; he helped. Is that not fact and evidence that the same will be true of the present and the future, even in ultimate catastrophe? These facts strengthen me to trust him, the great personal Fact, now, where I see no evidence. Such faith is by no means blind. It is based on a hindsight experience of him, on facts and on reason. On this basis we treat the problem of suffering.

Chapter III

The Atheistic & Agnostic Positions

Are there any really irreconcilable intellectual difficulties involved in believing in God, or are they only imaginary when carefully examined? I don't believe the ancients were on a lower intellectual plane than we moderns. Even though we have excelled them in technology, we see no evidence of intellectual lethargy on their part. Yet, perhaps a considerable percentage of them believed that the universe showed God's handiwork, whereas most moderns do not.

This difference in approach is not in any way a reflection on the total intellectual capacity of either the moderns or the ancients. Rather, it is a reflection of the increasing mass of knowledge with which every human being in every succeeding generation has to contend. An ancient could have been a master of all that was then known in the combined fields of physics, chemistry, mathematics, geometry, medicine, biology and algebra. Today the mass of knowledge is so great that no human brain can possibly cope with even a fraction of it. Therefore, a fragmentation of knowledge has occurred. But this massive increase has tended to take place in the watertight compartments of the various disciplines into which knowledge has become divided in order to fit the capacity of single brains. The result is that a synthesis of all modern knowledge is rapidly becoming less and less possible. This perfectly natural tendency has had some far-reaching consequences which must

be examined before we consider the question of the origin of evil, since the two problems belong together.

Just over a century ago, Darwin, Wallace and Huxley propounded the view that long time spans and chance reactions, coupled with natural selection, would account for all visible living nature without the necessity of involving the volition of any divinity. Huxley thought he could prove this with his appeal to probability laws and his famous six monkeys typing at random for millions of years on six typewriters. The mathematical formulae for the possibility of this view were bandied around and the principle was accepted as true. The natural and logical consequence of the view was that the postulate of divinity behind nature was rendered superfluous from a mathematical point of view. Immense time spans plus chance and natural selection would do all the work hitherto attributed to God. Thus the world of science became a realm depending on chance as a direct result of the views of these men who believed their

conclusions were mathematically well founded. Thus so called science was believed to have shown that there was no place for the God-postulate. As we shall see there is no scientifically founded reason for accepting this view.

The patient work of scientists simultaneously competent in several disciplines has been necessary to show that Darwin's and Huxley's basic assumptions were chemically, mathematically and biologically untenable.¹ The vastness of today's scientific knowledge makes it obvious that it is a rare scientist who is able to do original work in all these fields simultaneously. As a result, until recently no synthesis between the various fields had been achieved. Instead, water tight compartmentalization had developed. Biologists were unable to test the mathematics of the problem in hand and chemists could not critically assess the biologists' work.

The biologists announced with all due thunder that they could replace God with chance and long time spans plus

natural selection. But no mathematicians sufficiently versed in chemistry and biology were forthcoming to assess what the biologists were shouting about. As a result, one discipline, in this case biology, has been building on false chemical, thermodynamic and mathematical premises. The author has written elsewhere of the catastrophic development of this kind of compartmentalization of science.²

Because, in ancient times, learned men possessed a good overall view on life they could believe what the apostle Paul said about the universe demonstrating the nature of the Godhead. It agreed with what they knew about mathematics and biology.

What is generally not realized is that modern man could believe, as did the ancients, that the universe shows God's nature — and still remain within the bounds of modern scientific knowledge — if his knowledge had not become so great that it had to be wrongly compartmentalized. For when the various compartments are carefully examined, the fact emerges

that each still speaks one language today, as it did thousands of years ago: that "the heavens declare the glory of God," in spite of the mixture of good and bad.³

So we can believe in a good, loving, personal, holy and compassionate God behind it all. But what about evil? Is he the author of that too? The Koran teaches that God made "the mischief of creation," too.⁴ Is God the author of the mixed picture?

The Gothic Cathedral

Before the Second World War, I often visited the huge and beautiful Gothic cathedral at Cologne on the Rhine in Germany. I used to admire this fine example of the architecture of many hundred years ago, with its graceful flying buttresses, a superb high-domed roof, its famous two towers and the medieval stained glass windows.

The more I admired the cathedral, the more I found myself admiring the architects and masons who had originated the whole structure. Over the centuries they had patiently planned and built. All the

graceful lines and sturdy foundations had obviously been carefully planned by experts possessing sound knowledge of building mathematics and mechanics as well as a keen appreciation of how to combine both to produce a beautiful total edifice.

That it had so well withstood the ravages of the centuries showed that the workmen and designers not only understood the principles behind beauty, but also those of ensuring endurance. Their craftsmanship was first class in every way. Thus I found myself admiring our forefathers as I admired their workmanship. Considering that they had few of the mechanical devices a modern architect would consider essential for constructing such a masterpiece, the masons and architects of that day certainly did work wonders.

The structure of that cathedral, centuries after it had been built, showed without the slightest doubt something of the mind or minds behind it. Its very compact and organized design made one

wonder what sort of drawing offices the builders had at their disposal and how they made their blueprints. To imagine that such a well-conceived edifice simply arose without enormous planning effort would be to invite the just derision of anyone remotely familiar with the construction industry. Even calculations of the various strengths of the construction materials had to be made with old-fashioned arithmetic and not just handed over to a computer. Thus, an almost flawless work showed sharply the minds and hands of its creators. But the picture did not always remain as clear.

Complicating The Issue

During the war, Cologne suffered perhaps the most intensive air bombardment of any city in Western Europe. Reportedly, bombs fell on approximately every two square yards of the entire inner city. Now the cathedral stands almost directly in the railway station yard. Cologne is an important rail center, where many lines meet, particularly those con-

nected with the huge and concentrated Ruhr industrial area. Naturally, the allies bombed the railroad yards on many occasions and, not surprisingly, many bombs missed their mark and destroyed nearby housing and property. A number of heavy bombs hit the cathedral, causing immense damage.

In the fall of 1946 when I returned to Germany for the first time after the war, I was greatly dismayed at the sight of the cathedral. It seemed symbolic of the rest of Europe and her spirit. Almost irreparable damage had been done in five years of combat. However, as I approached, the two famous towers were still visible through the morning mist.

Practically every building in the vicinity was razed to the ground; the cathedral alone stood majestically in the midst of the carnage. Coming nearer, however, I could see huge, gaping holes in the sides of the two towers. The holes revealed the massiveness of the masonry, for any other building receiving glancing blows from such high-explosive bombs would have

collapsed entirely. But the cathedral, though badly damaged, was not destroyed. Hundreds of tons of concrete and bricks had been used to plug a huge hole high up in one tower, partially replacing the ancient masonry which had been blasted away by an aerial bomb.

The ancient roof was indescribably damaged. Huge rafters and beams, once the cathedral's glory, hung perilously down over the bomb-pocked floor. As the wind blew through the wreckage, small bits and pieces fell to the ground, building up the piles of rubble. A hole marked the place where the organ had once pealed out its accompaniment to worship.

This miserable piece of chaos made a deep impression on me as I stood in the same place where I had once admired the order and beauty of the original edifice. As those memories of former beauty passed through my mind, one idea never even occurred to me. Never did I connect the chaos of the formerly beautiful cathedral with any inefficiency or designed purpose

on the part of the constructing architects or masons! They had not built it for such maltreatment.

Similarly, I never began to doubt the existence of the men who designed and constructed the cathedral simply because I could now see so many contradictions in their handiwork. The place was a ruin. But in its ruination it still bore the marks of design. In fact, its design and original beauty were even more emphasized in some respects. For the huge gaping holes in the walls revealed the excellent construction even better than did the remaining undamaged walls. There was no fill or rubbish behind false walls; it was all solid handiwork built to last for centuries. The mighty flying buttresses were still there; the graceful Gothic arches were still standing. But the solid design which was built into the parts of the construction normally hidden from view, was now laid bare for all to see how well these craftsmen had done their job.

In summary, even the general ruin and chaos showed (1) the existence and

(2) the excellent work of both architects and craftsmen. Furthermore, the ruined structure itself showed in some ways even better than the intact one the existence and skill of the originators. In fact, the whole picture reminded me of the purpose of dissection in learning the anatomy of animals, men and plants. In order to see the order — and beauty — of some aspects of biology, the destroyed or dissected animal or plant serves better than the intact one. The cathedral had certainly been dissected, and its entrails laid bare.

Inefficient Architects?

Obviously no one was going to accuse the architects and craftsmen of designing and building a ruin. The cathedral had been constructed to last — almost forever. Something had happened to it which had not been planned or even conceived of. And yet, even in its ruination, it was generally quite easy to distinguish between the unplanned ruin and the actual architecture. The cathedral at the same time displayed both perfection and ruin-

ation — chaos and order mixed up inextricably with one another, just as the world around us presents a picture full of good and evil, beauty and ugliness, order and chaos, love and hate. No one in his right mind ought to deny that life as we see it is a hopeless hodgepodge of such ingredients. However, we should remember that it would be just as illogical to say that the mixed picture of the cathedral proves there was no architect behind it as to say that the ruined, mixed picture of life we see round about us proves that there is no God behind it. My professor, rightly seeing the hodgepodge before him, concluded that therefore,

1. The edifice of creation has neither mind or architect behind it. The atheist maintains that because he sees nothing but contradictions in nature, therefore there is no God or mind behind it. The Germans call this a 'Denkfehler', a short-circuit in the logic of thinking. And so it is. But it is one seldom seen through today.

2. No characteristics of a mind behind nature can be distinguished be-

cause the picture is so mixed. This again is a Denkfehler, because, as we have already pointed out in the case of the ruined cathedral, as long as any signs of order have escaped complete destruction in the general ruin, these "broken bits and pieces remaining of the flying buttresses and Gothic arches" will still show what sort of men planned them. Thus, even widely separated little pools of beauty, love, joy, order, healthy bodies and virtue which remain in the general hate, war, destruction, chaos and ugliness of the world of nature in which we live, still point unflinchingly to the architect who designed and produced it before ruination set in.

In fact, as seen in the cathedral, when chaos replaces order, it can often lay bare and dissect the original order better than could the intact orderliness of an organism, or unruined nature itself. The study of cancer cells — a good example of the "ruination" to which living entities can easily come — has laid bare many secrets of the healthy intact cell which would

never have been suspected had we had only normal healthy cells under our microscopes.

Summary

Therefore, we can maintain that even though the creation around us is certainly a hodgepodge of good and bad, even though life certainly presents a badly mixed picture, it is still untenable to conclude with my professor that this means there is no architect behind it, that everything arose due to chance and long time spans. Any little pool of love or order in the general rubble heap of nature must lead us to a mind or designer behind that pool, no matter how small and smothered in rubble it may be. Thus, a synthesis is possible, and the teaching of Romans 1 that the universe reveals enough of its Maker to bring any logical person to his knees in thankfulness and worship is confirmed.

Chapter IV

The Origin of Evil

Difficulties of the type discussed in Chapter II led Baudelaire, the French art historian and poet, to exclaim, "If there is a God, he is the devil!" Such a statement is the direct result of believing that man has always been as he is, good and bad, and was so designed originally.¹ This is the Muslim position.

Theistic evolutionists cannot avoid the same difficulty when they maintain that God used evolutionary processes to produce the world of nature as we see it today. If he did, then his methods made the bad with the good, as Baudelaire

maintains, and he therefore must be the devil as well as God. Everything pivots on whether we believe nature was once "good" and then subsequently ruined, whether we believe in the fall of man as laid down in Genesis. By tampering with the structural details of Genesis, we are likely to garble the whole reason for the present state of man — and the whole plan of his salvation which will take him out of the present disastrous mess. Genesis presents an integral whole on which the total plan of Scripture is firmly founded.

Let us return to the cathedral illustration of Chapter III. It is superfluous to point out that all illustrations and analogies are imperfect and have their weaknesses if pressed too far. Our illustration of the cathedral is no exception. One of its imperfections lies in the fact that the architects who designed and built the cathedral are long-since dead and therefore could not prevent the bombing of their masterpiece. Then is God dead, too? Was he dead when his masterpiece, nature, was "bombed" into ruin?

Today many assume God to be, in fact, dead and resolve the question that way. But this is a doubtful escape exit for several reasons. Although it might explain God's creative work in the past and its subsequent ruination, it would never explain the present maintenance of nature and creation. No dead God could take care of that. Christians rightly believe that he is not only the living creator, but also the living maintainer of nature — and of us. By very definition, the "God is dead" theory will not fit in here, for maintenance implies activity and life.

Thus the question now becomes: Why didn't an almighty God who made, maintains and presumably loves his masterpiece, creation, prevent its "bombing?" Here the parable of the cathedral can do us no more service.

People who continually ask the question, "Why doesn't God stop it?" are often those who don't bother to ask what "stopping it" would entail. Some specific details must be examined before attempting to solve the greater principles involved.

Consider any virtue of which a person is capable; love, kindness, honesty, faithfulness, chastity, or any of the traits named in Galatians 5 will do. Select a virtue which pleases us all — love — and ask the following question: “What is the nature of love in particular, and virtue in general?”

Nature Of Love And Virtue

This subject of the nature of love and virtue is vitally important because the Christian way of life maintains that God himself is love. Christians in the Western world often do not realize the tremendous import of this statement. I have given other religions, including Islam, some thought, and have studied Islam’s Holy Book, the Koran, which designates Allah as the compassionate, forgiving one. As far as I know, nowhere in the Koran does Allah figure specifically as an embodiment of love. He may threaten, may be merciful, omnipotent, compassionate and omnipresent. He may offer the faithful a place in the gardens of paradise with as many dark-eyed houris as they wish.² But

love never figures in the Koranic “revelations” of Allah’s nature. A designation of God as “love” stands unique in the Bible.

Right in the center, then, of the Christian position is this virtue we call love. It must be of vital importance for that very reason. Nevertheless, I find myself at an extreme loss when I am asked to rationally explain anything at all about God’s love. I know that “God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.”³ But God, even though loving, is also infinite. Therefore, he exceeds anything my thinking apparatus can handle. So I do not pretend to be able to plumb the depths of either his love or character. To think rationally about that love is far beyond me.

I suspect it is for this reason that when the Scriptures speak of God and his love, usually man’s love to a woman and vice versa is used to drive home the point at an anthropomorphic level. It is like using real-life illustrations to clarify abstract and abstruse points of chemistry to

non-scientific people. Thus, God provides information on himself and his love in a human setting in order to really communicate with us. The information we thus obtain by "cutting down the high voltage of God's love" to the "low voltage of human love," we will then apply to our main problem.

The first question in analyzing human love is: "How did this love between bride and bridegroom originate?" The history of most such relationships provides the answer. The young man met the young girl one day and sooner or later began to feel attracted to her. The attraction is better experienced than described. Very often the girl feels attracted to him at the same time, although she might at this stage be more hesitant to display her feelings. Often, he begins the action side of the relationship by looking for suitable ways to court her. But, until wooing is begun, the whole affair is lopsided. A one-sided relationship in which

attentions are not returned can be extremely painful. Certainly it is neither happy nor satisfying to either party.

At this stage there is one burning question which every prospective bridegroom would like answered as soon as possible: "Does she love me?" Is my attraction to her reciprocated?" One purpose of courtship is to give the girl a chance to settle the question in her own mind. For, once she notices the man's attentions and, therefore, attraction towards her, she has to make a momentous decision: "Can I return his affection?" If she thinks that she may do so, then she must decide if she can love him. Here she must rely on her own heart, as well as on her common sense and the principles of life to which she adheres. After due consideration, she may decide she does. An understanding is reached between the two. A radiant couple emerges, and great are the happiness and joy of two hearts that have entrusted themselves to one another in mutual love and faithfulness.

In order to answer the question why a God of love just doesn't "stop it" we must analyze this process of falling in love more closely in order to draw some reason out of what often appears to be an entirely unreasonable happening.

First, the young man must court the girl of his choice. She will be unhappy if he doesn't and he will be unmanly if he doesn't know how! Now, courtship is a very fine art, besides being a very necessary one. Some of our finest poetry, music and art have arisen as its by-products! Most important, perhaps, is that it is a so-called gentle art, which brings us to a cardinal point in our analysis.

The moment force takes the place of wooing, both love and the joy of love cease. They are often replaced by hate, recriminations and misery. For the whole structure of love is built on absolute mutual consent and respect for the character and sovereignty of the loved one. In other words, the structure on which human love between a bride and a bridegroom is squarely based is freedom to love.

Most civilized societies recognize precisely this structure in their marriage services. The two persons intending marriage are both given the public opportunity of making a free-will consent in saying "I will" before the assembled congregation. Old Testament cultures stand for exactly the same principle, as the following well-known story emphasizes.

Rebekah

When Eliezer, Abraham's servant, asked Rebekah to become Isaac's wife (Gen. 24), he became so assured that he had found God's choice for his master's son that he was ready to cut corners in the process of taking the bride home. The evidence that Rebekah was God's choice was so overwhelming that he wanted to speed things up, intending to take off immediately with the girl and forget about all the formalities or ceremonies.

However, Rebekah's relatives saw immediately that this was no basis for marriage, even though the Lord might be in it. What a good thing it would be if young

couples saw this point too, instead of just starting to live together with no ado or ceremonies. It is to emphasize the necessity of mutual public consent before love and lifelong married joy, the greatest relationship in our earthly life, that Rebekah's relatives got together and said that even though God might be in it all, Rebekah must first be publicly questioned on the matter. She had to give her own decision and opinion before they would let her go to Isaac. So they called her in before the family and their friends to ask whether she wanted Isaac. Only after she had given public consent, based on her own free-will decision, did they agree to marriage. They knew that no other basis was good enough, even though it was obviously God's will even without such public decision-making.

The Amnon And Tamar Affair

Thus, the first point arising out of this analysis of the basis of bride-bridegroom

relationships and love is that such a partnership is based firmly on public mutual consent or free will.

The second point deals with the consequences of neglecting the above point. The shocking "love affair" between Amnon and Tamar (2 Sam. 13) illustrates this danger in a crass way. Amnon fell madly in love with the king's beautiful daughter Tamar. He was so infatuated with the fair girl that he just could not wait to woo her and win her consent. By guile, Amnon arranged to be alone with the girl. Feigning sickness, he received the king's permission for Tamar to come and cook for him in his apartment. Having got rid of everyone else, he proceeded to force the poor girl because he was so madly "in love" with her. "Love" that cannot wait to woo is abnormal. It often metamorphoses before our eyes into "lust."

The consequence of this haste and trickery was that Amnon's "love" turned in a twinkling into hate for her. The eventual result was murder, for her relatives had Amnon murdered later for his brutality

and treachery. Tamar suffered heartbreak and “remained desolate in her father’s house” (2 Sam. 13:20).

Free Choice

In order to love in this sense — not merely physical union, which can result from lust — we must experience the mutual attraction and union of body, soul and spirit in an exclusive personal relationship.

If the basis of mutual consent in the love relationship is removed, if there is no freedom to love, if freedom is replaced by force, then all possibility of loving is removed. Love can be replaced then by its opposite — hate. This implies, of course, the further step of logic: Where there is true freedom to love, there is also freedom not to love. If this freedom to say “no” were not really present, there would ipso facto be no freedom to say “yes” and to love. The ability to say “no” must be just as genuine as the ability to say “yes” if true mutual consent is to be achieved as a basis for love.

As we have seen, the Bible teaches that God himself is love, and his love is often likened to the bride-bridegroom relationship. Our third conclusion is that, if his love to us is to be compared in some way with our human nuptial love, then the principles governing the two loves can be expected to be comparable in some ways. We should expect God, on this basis, to be the grand wooer. That being the case, we should expect him to be awaiting our response to his wooing. To receive and experience his love we should expect the mutual-consent basis to decide everything — my consent to him in answer to his “attraction to and love for” me.

Thus, we conclude that if God is love in this sense of the word, he will be looking for answering love from me. Love is only satisfied if it is returned. He woos us by many means, mainly by having sent his Son, the Second Person of the Trinity, to justify us by dying and being resurrected for us.

Being love, we would not expect him to demand or attempt to force love. That would be a contradiction. The very attempt to do so would destroy the basis of all love. As our true lover he does everything to show the true nature of his love — even to becoming a fellow man, heir to our lot as well as bearing our sin. Jesus was serious about his love — serious even to death.

The Case Of The Robot

Consider one more vital point. What would have happened if God had so constructed man that he could not make a true free-will decision himself, but was only capable of automatically doing God's will, just as a lock opens when one turns the correct key in it? If man had been so constructed that, when a certain "button" in his mind was depressed he delivered "love" automatically, would real love be in fact delivered? Of course the answer is negative. Such a person would be "con-

genitally" devoid of free will and therefore incapable of love and virtues in any real sense of the word.

None of us would be interested in "loving" the outward form of a partner who, every time we touched a certain "button," put chocolate in its mouth or stroked its hair or automatically intoned the sentence "I love you." If such a system were conceived or constructed, it would have to be subhuman or machine by nature. For to try to construct it so that it delivered "virtue" or "love" on command would of necessity mean that it be devoid of humanity, and therefore personality, and as a result it could deliver nothing of the kind. Assume that God, in order to be sure of our love and to make sure that we were "virtuous" in every way, made us like marionettes. He would have taken from us the possibility of really exercising our free will in order that we might not exercise it wrongly. Wanting to be so sure that we loved him and our fellowmen, he would have made us so that we could not do otherwise. Whenever he pressed a button,

we would “deliver the goods,” just like a vending machine. How could such a setup involve real love in any way?

The Grand Risk

This brings us right up to the great principle. If God wanted creatures that really loved him and their fellow-beings, then he was, by the very intrinsic nature of love, obliged to recognize the fact (though it sounds strange to us to use such phraseology and maintain that God was forced to do anything — his own moral nature brings with it the consequence that he will or must act according to that nature) that love and virtue demand absolute freedom to love and exercise freedom. Such a necessity lies in the very structure of love and, indeed, of any other true virtue. Thus, to create the possibility of love, God had to create free personalities just like himself, for he is love and he made us to love.

For God to plan at all for true love involved the built-in risk of the proposed free partner-in-love not loving at all. To

have built the love-partner so that he would be congenitally obliged to respond would have been to destroy the whole purpose of designing a creation where love could reign. God wished—and still wishes—to set up a kingdom of love on earth and in heaven. But to do so involves the above-outlined risk of the free partners choosing not to love, but to do the opposite of their own free will—or even to hate. The practical result of being indifferent to or hating is the same from the divine partner's point of view. For there is no positive response to his love in either case. And love aims at a response of love. Thus, either love grows by responding, or it dies.

Almsgiving And The Socialist State

Exactly the same risk is involved in planning any and every virtue. Take, for example, the virtue of almsgiving. In Turkey one sees hundreds of needy beggars. There are the blind holding certified photographs of their suffering wives and children needing support. There are those lying in the gutters, with their misshapen

bodies uncovered so that all who pass by can see they are not counterfeiting. There is the poor man who has his feet where his shoulder should be, loudly and slowly repeating selected passages from the Koran. There is the old man suffering from Parkinson's Disease, whose saliva continually runs over his poor old dirty face as he holds out an empty trembling hand all day long. Seeing this misery causes one to exercise compassion and give a coin so that they can eat a slice of good Turkish bread. Naturally one is convinced that something much more fundamental should be done for these thousands of people so representative of suffering humanity. But a coin will at least guarantee that the immediate plague of gnawing hunger will be assuaged.

So one gives something to the poor mother sitting in rags underneath the mailbox at the post office, with her week-old, unwashed baby on her ragged lap. In so doing one exercises a virtue — that of almsgiving. The immediate reward is an extra-fervent prayer to Allah for the giver's

salvation. The joy on the recipient's face would be reward enough. To exercise any virtue is a free-will operation which brings joy to the giver and to the receiver.

If, however, beggars are cared for by taxes, and the city authorities send me a tax bill to help support the poor and needy, then I must pay. It may be a good thing to organize matters in this way. Many maintain that this method is less degrading for the poor and that the burden is more equally distributed. I agree with them in this respect. But let us be clear about one of the overlooked consequences.

In paying my taxes which are used to support the poor and the needy, I no longer exercise the virtue I did when I gave the alms to the poor young mother. I might have paid about 10 dollars in taxes for the poor, or I might have given the young woman 10 dollars to buy her baby something better than dirty rags. The sum of money involved is irrelevant. In one case I exercise the virtue of almsgiving (and reap a blessing) while in the other case I

must pay my taxes, grumbling perhaps about the waste perpetrated by the bureaucracy of the tax office, with no consequent blessing, even though I may be perfectly right.

In one case I exercise no virtue. In the other case, where I give of my own free will in almsgiving I exercise a virtue — simply because I do not have to act. Therein lies the difference: “forced charity” is no charity — and “forced love” is no love. Love and virtue melt in the grip of force just as ice melts under the pressure of a vice.

If I force my children to be “good” when we are out visiting, they may be outwardly exemplary — sometimes they are! I am thankful for this, but I recognize the fact that most parents will be familiar with — that this “goodness” may not be even skin deep! Force itself, unaided, can make no one good and virtues tend to fade away in its presence.

These considerations disclose one of the fatal weaknesses of our increasingly socialized world. All “charity” and “works of love” tend to become organized by the

state, which rightly wishes to eliminate the humiliation to which the poor are subjected in accepting certain kinds of "charity." The joy and virtue of true charity and love disappear immediately when the forced tax replaces the free-will offering. The Lord Jesus Christ himself remarked that it was more blessed to give than to receive, thus emphasizing the "blessedness" or happiness accompanying the free act of giving.

The exercise of any real virtue ennobles and enriches the character, giving real joy and radiance to those practicing it. Thus the socialized state often robs its citizens of the flights of exuberance to which free exercisers of love and charity are heir.

George Muller's Orphanages

Over a century ago in Bristol, England, George Muller set up his orphan homes which were run and staffed entirely by the free-will offerings and services of Christians in sympathy with his aims. Witnesses of Muller's work said that these

homes full of the victims of suffering were real havens of love, joy and rest to thousands of orphans. Today many such orphanages (not Muller's) have been taken over by the state. The state institute is often merely a matter of rates and taxes, and the person in charge is sometimes a career person who makes no attempt to be a "mother" or a "father" to the children. Often the atmosphere of such an institution is as cold and devoid of love as the concrete bricks of which it was constructed. Scientists have shown that children in such institutions die from lack of love as often as they die from disease.⁴

The welfare state, in taking over everything to remove a few real abuses, too often kills love and the other virtues which make up the atmosphere of a home. Removing the freedom of service, the voluntary basis, causes love to evaporate. Not only do the children or inmates of these institutions suffer. The ennobling of character which the voluntary staff members would themselves receive by free-will service is lost by their becoming merely

career people. The more the world loses this right to freely exercise true charity, the harder, colder and more bitter it must become.

This disastrous effect is seen in the character of most socialized nations. In fact, it is producing just what Hitler produced in Germany by the same means: de-personalization — people who may do their duty, but who will not raise a finger to help close a concentration camp if it involves personal risk. Their characters have not experienced the ennobling, strengthening effect which results from the exercise of freedom. Hitler was a living example of a man naive enough to attempt to demand and command the love and affection of his people. He may have realized at the end that love evaporates under just such pressure. The strength of character necessary to withstand any tyrant is not likely to be built in any generation without the ennoblement of character resulting from long exercise of the various human virtues we have discussed. Such strength will also overcome

the various vicissitudes of life which often complicate the career of anyone strong enough in will to be ready to suffer for his own conscience's sake.

The tendency today is to push everything onto the community, resulting in private character impoverishment. We all know the person who "doesn't want to get involved." The second tendency, contingent partly on the first, is to bring up every child to conformity, so that only the will of the community and majority counts. Thus the steel of a private conscience, independent of conformity to the mass, does not develop. In Hitler's Germany, this was seen at its extreme development. People saw corpses dropping out of vans coming from a concentration camps as they passed through a big city. But fear had so eroded characters that no one did anything — it was too dangerous to get involved!

In Chicago a few years ago I was walking from the Chicago and Northwestern Railway Station as I saw a man in a car literally plow his way through a group of old ladies as they crossed the street on a

pedestrian crossing with a green light. He knocked one old lady down, injuring her. I took the license number of the car, which did not stop, and asked for witnesses. Many young women and men going to work in a neighboring shoe factory had seen the incident. But all backed away, muttering something about not getting involved. I didn't get a single witness.

The idea of the community providing for everyone's need "from the cradle to the grave" may be excellent from a purely humanitarian point of view. But, insofar as it takes away personal initiative, the realization of the scheme will never provide sterling characters ready and willing to suffer for conscience's sake and to stand alone, if necessary.

The Creation, Seen And Unseen

The Bible reports that when God contemplated the creation of the worlds seen and unseen he wished to construct them so that they reflected his very own nature and character. To do this, he had to build on freedom of action. He is free, so

he had to make man and angels free too. Man was made "in his image" — that is, as a free personality, just as God himself is. For even "his service is perfect freedom" and therefore founded and maintained in love. Accordingly, the angels who serve him, including their chief Lucifer, the light-bearer, were given natures capable of genuine love to their Creator and toward their fellows. They were capable of wooing his love and being wooed by him so that the perfect joy of love could reign in that kingdom. But this very possibility had to include the option of rejection. They were no puppets.

The Bible reports, quite as a matter of fact, that a large proportion of the unseen host showed that it really was capable of the joy of that kingdom of love and — by a very real proof — of rejection! Therefore, Lucifer did, in fact, show that he could love, in that he began, for reasons of pride, to reject the one perfect lover, his Creator. Turning his back on Him, who is the sole good, Lucifer became the epitome of the bad. So arose the cursed, loveless and

hateful ones who, in the exercise of their characters now turned away from the good toward the bad and proceeded to destroy the good creation. Men become "devils" by exactly the same process. Obviously God, his nature being love, did not immediately take away all freedom of action and choice from his creatures, thus removing the possibility of a return to love. He allowed them still further freedom of choice, which meant, in their case, still further destructive activities being permitted. If he had taken away this possibility of freedom of choice at the first sign of rejection of love, he would have destroyed any further possibility of a return to love. So he has given us all a long time of freedom of action, that is, freedom to love, so that the kingdom of love can still begin again to rule, if man and angels want it. To have "stopped it all" at once by the strong hand of "dictatorship" would automatically have destroyed the very purpose for which the Creator had created his universe — in order to set up a kingdom of love in the seen and the unseen.

Therefore, this very existence of evil in a world created by an almighty, but also a loving God actually illustrates that the good and the virtue in it are genuinely good. Love in such a kingdom really is love and not anything else. Sometimes it is taught that love is a covert form of egoism, etc. The state of our fallen world really shows this to be impossible — the love of God in a world of blood is genuine enough!

Destroyers and haters usually want company in their activities. So when the chief, Lucifer, the light-bearer, had become the destroyer and the hater, he immediately approached Eve to make her and her husband become a part of his company of destroyers. The pair was also capable of true love. They possessed true freedom of choice, as is shown by the actual choice they made. They, too, turned their backs on the good, automatically becoming polarized to the chronically bad. So the whole seen and unseen creation of love became a creation of the wrong choice — the choice which turned its back on the source of all ultimate good. In leaving

open a chance for seen and unseen creation to return to the ultimate good, God did not “stop the bad.” The free choice was still left open, leaving ruination and its cause still intact. That is the reason why God allows it — to provide a genuine chance for the return of love in general.

The Dignity Of Man

But does not all this lead to one main conclusion? Does it not all go to show the truly high esteem in which God holds his creatures, man included? It means that God really takes our decisions, our thoughts and our selves seriously. He even goes to the lengths of wooing us to make our decisions ourselves. He does not so construct us that we are puppets who have all decisions programmed — even though many physical processes within the body are pre-programmed.⁵ True love is, in this respect, always the same — it always esteems and respects its partner. It takes the partner seriously.

The same thought also expresses why God bothers to woo men by “the foolish-

ness of preaching⁶ and not by sending, as he could, mighty angels with his message. Perhaps they would only succeed in terrifying poor humanity if they appeared in their supernal splendor. God's purpose is to win man's simple trust and confidence, to win our devotion and genuine love. Therefore, he uses the natural methods available to win our decision for him. If he overawed us in any way, that might make craven slaves of us rather than whole-hearted sons. If he were to browbeat us into submission, he would only gain what Hitler did — the abject, groveling fear (if not secret hatred) of his would-be partners.

Thus a God of love avoids like the plague the dictator's methods in dealing with man, the object of his love, and uses the lover's better method. It is very fundamental to see that one cannot terrorize people into love. Consider the miracles Jesus performed in this light. He never used a show of divine power in healing to frighten people into belief. In most cases, after doing some mighty healing deed, he

admonished those who had seen the deed or experienced it to keep very quiet about it. Jesus' warning "tell no man" is almost proverbial in this respect. The fact is, God does not wish to force our intelligence or our will to reduce us to the state of cringing slaves. He wants redeemed sons, who, of their own free will, love, respect and gladly serve him.

The Degree Of Man's Freedom

Thus we conclude that man must be free indeed if he is ever to be able to love indeed. There is a consequence to all this which the reader will have surely noted already. It is this: Is man so free that God has abrogated all authority over him? Can man do exactly and precisely as he likes as long as he likes so that he can be said to possess a totally unfettered freedom in all directions as far as he himself chooses? Need he never fear that his Creator will intervene — all in the interests of man's ability to love and exercise virtue?

Although the Bible teaches that man has a bona-fide free will and can certainly

say no to his Creator's will and plan (the very state of our poor world shows that this is de facto the case), yet it teaches too that there are limits to that freedom just as there are limits to God's wooing activities of man. These wooing limits, it will be remembered, were founded in God's counsel from his side and, in time, from man's side. In the first place, God in his inscrutability sets a time limit for his wooing of our free will. Thus it cannot be said that we have perfect free will to accept or reject his wooing at any time. Our free will interacts with his free will to woo us and if he chooses to stop the courting process, our free will can do precisely nothing about the new situation. Here it is no longer unfettered. Second, repeated rejection of the goodness of God's courting sears the psyche of man, rendering it less and less receptive. This, too, is a process we cannot alter; it is like the second law of thermodynamics at work in our inward man, and our free will cannot alter it.

The same principle applies throughout man's kingdom in its relationship to

man's Creator. Man can say no to his Creator for a certain time by expressing free will. But this process of saying no of our own free will to God interacts with God's free will and may produce a no from his side. For us dependent creatures this is the same thing as judgement supervening after grace. We all can turn our backs on him and run away from him and his goodness — until we reach what may be looked upon as the end of our tether. The tether represents the change in God from grace to judgement. How long that may take in each individual case of God's dealings is unknown to his creatures. This state of affairs is well seen in the case of the apostle Paul on the Damascus road. Paul had enjoyed perfect unfettered free will to rebel against Christ and had done so very successfully, until even he reached the end of the tether God had allowed him. Then God intervened severely, blinded him and reduced him to the dependence of a child in his helplessness. But even in a drastic intervention of this type, the judgment of God was mixed with great

mercy and it led to Paul's seeing the grace of God in restricting his field of unfettered free will. But perhaps his free will in the strictest sense of the term was not touched. Perhaps his knowledge was increased.

If we do not recognize some definite limits to our freedom, we risk abrogating God's ultimate authority and, indeed, sovereignty. Yet these limits in no way alter the conclusions we have drawn about the vital nature of freedom if we are to be able to love — or to rebel. One reason for this fact is that we ourselves do not know where the limits we are talking about lie. Therefore we are, to all intents and purposes, unlimited in our freedom from our own perspective. From our own point of view we are free to act, wander, rebel or love as under-sovereigns within a small area of God's sovereign kingdom. It is just within this area of real unrestricted freedom that real love and virtue can and do rule in us. Outside these unseen limits are areas of judgment and no-freedom. But since they are unknown to us, they are, for

practical purposes, fictitious for us and thus of no concern in our decisions to rebel or to love.

The very fact that man has never succeeded in devising a formal proof of God's existence shows how completely God can and does hide himself and his limits from our eyes. This being the case, most men act within the area of their own lives as completely free agents as far as their intelligence is concerned. This makes their decisions in that frame of mind completely free will and therefore valid from the point of view of exercising true virtue. We conclude, then, that the limits God has set for all mankind do not alter our decisive free will and its accompanying power of love or rebellion. These very limits maintain God's sovereignty while allowing man free agency in the area of his own consciousness.

One more thing deserves mention at this point: the "tether" we have referred to as God's restricting hand on our free will should not be regarded as something fixed or static. It is not of a set permanent

“length.” It is my belief that the more devoted a man is to God’s will for him, the longer the “tether” will become. That is, the greater will be the radius of freedom of action. To stick to our analogy of a tether, we might say that its elasticity depends upon our will being congruent with his divine will. To use the words of the apostle Paul, to “win Christ” and to attain to his confidence in us is the same thing as saying that the more we attain to the width, depth and breadth of God’s will, the more we attain to his sovereign freedom too. As one prayer book has it, “His service is perfect freedom.”

Chapter V

The Problem of Rebuilding

Just what would we expect a God of love to do after his creatures had chosen the wrong road — turning their backs on the only good?

The Scriptures say that even before the wrong choice had been taken either by man or angels, God, because he is omniscient, knew all about it. He had even drawn up careful plans in advance to cope with the situation that would arise, even though he was in no way responsible for it, nor did he cause it (cf Rev. 13:8, Eph. 1:4, Heb. 4:3, 1 Pet. 1:19-20).

This last fact — that God, if he is God, must obviously have been omniscient with respect to the fall long before it happened — has been a stumbling block to many. Actually, few real intellectual difficulties are involved in this matter if it is considered carefully.

If I observe a person carefully over a period of time, I may notice some of his little idiosyncrasies. He may say “Ah,” for example, as a prelude to every difficult word he has to pronounce. Or he may twitch his eyebrows (or his ears) before relating a good joke. Gradually I learn to predict just what he is going to do before he actually does it. My previous observations allow me to do this with a fair amount of accuracy.

However, my ability to foretell his actions in no way makes me responsible for them when he acts. Similarly, the fact that God was able to foresee what Adam and Eve, the angels and mankind in general, would do, does not necessarily implicate him in the sense that it makes him responsible for initiating their actions

and choices. The only implication is that involved in his having given them a gloriously free choice of action in order to create the possibility of their love.

The Problem Of The Consequences

At this point many will maintain that, if God saw in advance the chaos, misery and suffering which would certainly follow the gift of the possibility of love, why did he proceed with his plans to create. Was he not rather sadistic to have persisted in these plans, knowing the consequences in advance?

In principle, the same type of questioning arises every day in our own lives, but seemingly we don't recognize this fact. Consider, for example, the decision we must make on whether to marry. Even the marriage ceremony emphasizes rather drastically that the same question is involved, for the clergyman says our marriage vows are binding until death us do part. Surely there is scarcely greater grief than that experienced by a really devoted couple when separated by death. We could,

of course, avoid this terrible grief by the simple expedient of not creating a marriage relationship at all! Avoid marriage and its love relationship and no grief of parting by death will ever overtake you.

Yet, we rightly go into marriage with our eyes open. We know that, in normal circumstances, death and all its sorrows will overtake us and will separate us. Most of us fear this more than we could ever say. In spite of all this we marry, because we believe that the joy of love and the ennoblement of giving ourselves to another in the abandon of devotion even for a day (and forty or fifty years pass like a day) is better than no love at all. It is written of Jesus Christ that he endured the sorrows of death on the cross for the sake of the joys which would result from the sorrow.¹ The same principle is involved here. The joy of love, even "short" love, because it stems from a God of love, compensates for even the sorrows of a cruel death such as that which Jesus suffered for all mankind, and the death which separates all lovers.

The enrichment and ennoblement of the human character brought about by the experience of even the brief joy of love, as God intended it to be, compensate for certain future death, separation and present trials. It is a question of balance. Those who know the love of God in Christ and those who have experienced a faint taste of that same quality of love in God-given marriage will confess that it is worth the certain severe suffering which it brings with it. The principle is that even a little, short-lived love is better than none at all. The reason is that even mortal love changes the eternal human psyche.

Evidently the Creator, being love personified, thinks this way too, for he did indeed create us and the rest of the fallen creation, in spite of the foreseen mess and separation.

All the same, many people — including ourselves sometimes — feel tempted to say “God, forgive God”² when contemplating the dire mess in which the world finds itself. Yet, if it is true as the Scriptures assure us³ that temporal sufferings

can and do bring eternal recompense, if it is true that suffering is not necessarily punitive but can be remedial as well, then, relying on the Scriptures, we are able to accept the anguish, just as God did when he crucified God to remedy the fall of man.

The next question is: what would we expect God to do to pull us out of the mire?

The Problem Of God's Answer

Now that the fall has taken place and sin and anguish are in the world, what would we expect God's answer to be? The answer we give will depend entirely on our conception of God's character.

If God is a God of love, then he is our loved one. What would we expect a true loved one to do who had been misunderstood and rejected? Perhaps the scriptural answer is the best one here: Love "suffereth long, and is kind...is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil... beareth all things... endureth all things... (love) never faileth."⁴

Surely that is the reaction we would expect of someone who truly loves us.

Love endures all these things in the hope of ultimate success in the wooing process of love. God saw man's wrong choice and all of its consequences which would lead to chaos and anguish, long before the wrong choice was made. When it did come, however, we would not expect a real God of love to impatiently and disgustedly dismiss and destroy the object of his love. Many who have difficulties with these points apparently expect God to act like a hard-hearted unforgiving tyrant rather than a forgiving father. Such an expectation probably arises from the fact that such action is typical of short-fused people like ourselves. But, then, we are no real examples of love in being short-fused.

In actual fact, we would expect a God of love to try to salvage what he could out of the carnage. It takes the patience of genuine love to set about this process. He had warned in faithfulness and sternness of the consequences of the wrong choice — men would surely die of it — but neither angel nor man heeded. One thing God would not be expected to do, once the

wrong choice had been taken, would be to block the way back to himself by attempting to threaten, cajole or force us back. Force cannot restore anything in the way of love. That would be to cut off all possibility of a way back.

How To Restore Love

Thus, in order to restore love, there remains only one way open — the exercise of further patient love. Accordingly, God exercises long-suffering and patience in trying to win us back freely to love and reason.

Therefore, we should expect the consequences of the fall not to be “fire and thunder,” but rather the “still small voice” in the attempt to realize the word said about God by the apostle: “who desires all men...to come to the knowledge of the truth.”⁵

But this attitude of quietness and perseverance can be mistaken for passivity or even inactivity. A large part of the Scriptures is devoted to just this point, in fact. God is not inactive; he is not indiffer-

ent. He is certainly not dead: "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but he is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."⁶ This means just what it says: not all men will repent and come to a knowledge of the truth. But it confirms that God is a God of love and patience who is ready and willing to receive all who do turn to him.

The fact, then, that He has waited so long before judging sinful man is, in reality, another indication of God's true character — loving-kindness, patience, long-suffering, not being easily provoked. Only by looking at the situation in this way can I see any explanation of why God has not long since exercised general judgement on all of us and set up a "puppet state" on earth and in heaven to slavishly and immediately carry out his every demand, just as any dictator would do if he could, particularly if his will had been thwarted as God's will certainly has been.

Thwarting God's Will

Some will feel shocked. Can, then, God's will be thwarted? The fatalistic Muslims think not. Is it possible that his will may not be done on earth as it is in heaven? Anyone unsure about this point should ask himself whether God planned any act of sadism that has taken place. Was it his will to kill six or seven million Jews in gas chambers simply because they were Jews? Was this not, rather, thwarting God's perfect will? And does not any other sin also thwart it?

Sinning is one way of thwarting his will. Another way would be to set up a dictatorship to "restore order to the chaotic creation." If this route to rebuilding creation were adopted, it would just as effectively thwart God's real purpose of setting up a kingdom of love. Under the present circumstances of freedom to do good or bad, there are still a few people who see the situation as it really is and who turn to God to be refreshed by his love, even in the midst of the general anguish of creation. Even a little of such

love and refreshment is better than none at all. If the Lord had judged immediately after the fall or after any sin, how many who have since drunk of the water of the well of life and love would have been lost to him and his kingdom of love for ever? His patience has been rewarded with responding love which would have been impossible if immediate judgment had supervened.

King George VI Of England

A story is told about King George VI of Great Britain and how he won Elizabeth. As a young man the future king fell in love with the charming young Scottish lady. After a long time of reflection he plucked up his courage and approached her on the subject, although he was rather shy, especially with the opposite sex. He had never been much of a lady's man and was neither very robust nor strongly masculine in the film-star sense of the word. Moreover, he had a slight speech defect, which added to his difficulties. His proposal was rejected.

The young prince, greatly upset over this rebuff, asked his mother, Queen Mary, for her advice. The Queen listened sympathetically to her son's tale of woe. Then she told him she just wanted to ask one question before advising him. Did he really love Elizabeth only? Would he be able to find a substitute if Elizabeth proved reluctant? After a moment's consideration, he replied that he would marry Elizabeth or no one else. "Well then," said his mother, "there is only one way open to you. Go and ask her again."

So the young prince put his pride in his pocket, gathered up his remaining courage, and arranged another interview with Elizabeth. He probably stuttered as he repeated his proposal, remembering what had happened to him the first time at her hands. She refused him again.

Not knowing what to do then, he returned to his mother, Queen Mary, for advice. Again she listened quietly — some say, severely — to the whole story. She showed him every sympathy, and, after hearing all he had to say, indicated that

she had one question to ask before she could advise him. The question was: "Do you really want her after this rebuff? There are plenty of other young ladies around who would be delighted to have a prince as a husband. I myself could show you some." But poor George was quite clear about his feelings. It was Elizabeth or no one at all. "Then," said his mother, "in that case there is only one way open to you. Go and ask her again."

So, after a considerable period of mental preparation, the young prince approached the pretty young Scottish lady the third time. In the meantime, she had noticed how serious the prince was. His love and determination to win her had indeed been constant. She saw that the great effort he made in coming the third time, putting his pride in his pocket demonstrated his singleness of purpose. And she began to recognize something new in herself. His undoubted love toward her was beginning to kindle an answering fire in her own heart. His warmth of love, even though he was awkward and not very

good at courting a young lady's affection, was beginning to warm her affection towards him. In short, his love was beginning to kindle her love, and she began to transmit some of the love she received from him. She began to feel she was able to say that she loved and admired him in his singleness of purpose and constancy. Thus, the story goes, began one of the really happy families in the annals of royal households. This love lasted until the king's death.

Love begets love. But it often has to be very patient, longsuffering and kind until the fire is kindled in the prospective partner's heart. The Scriptures say that God woos in one way or another every man and woman ever born.⁷ Through the circumstances of life, or through the Scriptures, he quietly goes on as the years pass, until we begin to return to him some of the warmth of love which he has for us. For we are told that God has his delight among the sons of men.⁸ He loves us,⁹ indifferent or rejectors though we have been of his overtures towards us. He is

working toward the day when we may begin to return to him the same love, and to delight in his friendship as he will delight in ours.

Once kindled, this love must be regularly tended in order to maintain the warmth of the blaze which God intends our love to be — warming and refreshing to both partners, so that both can rejoice in the happiness which love brings. God is love and we were so constructed in his image that we can only flourish when bathed in such love — breathing it in and giving it out.

But it would be one-sided to leave the story here. All love stories do not end this way. We must look at one other less pleasant possibility.

The Final Refusal

There comes a time in every love affair where a final answer toward the wooer must be made. This final answer may be either yes or no. One day the wooed one may make a rejection which, although she perhaps did not know it, was the final one.

It turns out to be permanent. In the one case, she may, of course, die. That finishes the wooing of a mortal man — when immortality lays hold of the prospective bride.

Another possibility is that the wooer may cease to woo. The “wooed” is not the only one who has a free will to accept or reject the wooer. God as the wooer has a free will too — to stop or to continue wooing according to his infinite wisdom. He can decide how long to woo and be rejected and also when to stop wooing altogether. Even this final decision to stop wooing, will, we are told, be made on a basis of love. It will, accordingly, be put off as long as possible.

There is a third and last possibility. If the wooed marries another, then further courtship by the first suitor would be thoroughly out of order and outside the confines of love. The Scriptures say quite clearly that this state of affairs may be reached in the spiritual sense. There comes a time when a man “marries this world,” and after that, God no longer offers his

salvation, his "marriage relationship" to him. His Spirit strives with him no longer. A man's spirit and God's Spirit become forever estranged, for man's spirit finally "marries another," selling itself to this world and its rebellion against the Most High.

We humans can seldom clearly see when such a final act takes place. We cannot determine when God's Spirit gives a man up forever. But that such does occur is perfectly clear, even though it is invisible to man's mortal eye. We can give ourselves entirely over to material things such as a career, money or social standing. It may be the love of things more definitely sinful that cuts us off. In extreme cases, we can "sell ourselves to the devil" quite consciously — as many Nazis did when they knowingly cooperated with Hitler in liquidating human beings in the interests of their own promotion within the party. Many do the same just as effectively when they value promotion in their jobs before promotion in the kingdom of heaven. They do not seek "the

kingdom of heaven first."¹⁰ Some men resolve never to discuss spiritual matters again because "they disturb." For them, the courtship is over; they're married to another.

The New Testament letter to the Hebrews speaks of that cessation. "Today when you hear this voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, on the day of testing in the wilderness, where your fathers put me to the test and saw my works for forty years. Therefore, I was provoked with that generation and said, "They always go astray in their hearts; they have not known my ways." As I swore in my wrath, "They shall never enter my rest."¹¹

The context of this statement shows that the Lord spoke and spoke again, and wooed and wooed again, but the Hebrews of that generation closed their hearts and inward ears. In the end God gave them up, and that generation, except for Joshua and Caleb, never entered the promised land but perished in the wilderness. This serves as a parable for us, to whom God

also speaks. We can be so occupied with the joys and trials of this life that we, too, do not hear. We, too, can miss the joy and rest of his love by acting as did the Hebrews.

“For it is impossible to restore again to repentance those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the goodness of the Word of God and the powers of the age to come, if they then commit apostasy, since they crucify the Son of God on their own account and hold him up to contempt.”¹²

This warning is to those who have at one time responded to God’s wooing, and have therefore tasted his goodness, and then cease to respond. A time comes when it is impossible to renew them, for the striving of God’s Spirit with them ceases.

Another Scripture passage speaks in exactly the same tenor: “For if we sin deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful prospect of

judgment, and a fiery fire which will consume the adversaries... How much worse punishment do you think will be deserved by the man who has spurned the Son of God and profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and outraged the Spirit of grace?...It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."¹³

I take this warning for myself, believing that I can learn from all Scripture. The point is, God can and does speak to men; he does woo. If they respond, he allows them to taste in this life the things of his kingdom of love. But his wooing is dynamic, and it is dependent on our daily response. Continual spurning may end in our "marrying another forever." Then his wooing stops. Rejecting God's grace in Christ simply means declaring ourselves as candidates for no grace, which is the same thing as being ripe for judgment.

This raises the whole question of judgment at the hands of a so-called loving and gracious God. Can we accept

this? Is all suffering a judgment? Or must suffering and judgment be kept apart in our minds?

Chapter VI

Suffering: Is There Any Reasonable Interpretation?

Resentment Against Purposeless Suffering

Many people as they undergo suffering resent what is happening because they can often see no constructive purpose behind it. "Senseless" suffering, such as we see when innocent children are destroyed or mutilated in war, sickness, plague or famine, makes our anger and impatience rise. The impatience increases when we see pain which is not only

“senseless” or “random” but apparently designed and calculated, or even “refined,” as is the pain at the root of malaria.

A good example of apparent sadism arises in considering, as did C.S. Lewis, the deafness of a musical genius such as Beethoven.¹

An absolute master of the art and science of sound struck down with stone deafness! Could a greater refinement of apparent sadism be conceived? Hence the impatience of many when they merely begin to consider the problem of suffering.

Yet, on the other hand, anyone considering himself to be a Christian is warned on every side to expect both joy and suffering as normally as summer and winter. Both are, according to the Scripture, integral parts of the Christian experience. Being a Christian does not provide exemption from suffering with the rest of mankind. Rather, there is the promise of additional suffering for Christians. The apostle Paul says explicitly that the Christian must enter the Kingdom not only in joy but through the gates of many

trials, tribulations and sufferings, being forsaken of man, and, apparently by God too, before reaching the final gate of death.²

If God Is Good, Will He Hurt Us?

Lewis puts this very question in another light when he writes: "If God's goodness is inconsistent with his hurting us, then either God is not good or there is no God; for, in the only life we know he hurts us beyond our worst fears and beyond all we can imagine."³ Plainly, this means that if we believe in God at all, we must believe that it is consistent with his perfect nature, kindness and love to hurt us and to leave us wallowing in our own blood, as it were, right up to the end.

Lewis adds a rider to this statement which asks, in effect, if we accept that in this life God can hurt us beyond all that we can imagine, and that this hurting is consistent with his goodness, have we any valid reasons for believing that he should not, if necessary, continue hurting us in the same way after this mortal life is over?⁴ Obviously there is no moral reason why he

should not, if spirits can endure suffering as mortal men do. Numerous passages of Scripture need to be examined carefully in this connection. Neither Lewis nor we are suggesting that the torments of hell are universal after death! The real question is whether suffering serves any purpose in this life and in that to come.

We can, however, go one step further and still remain on safe ground. If God has good reasons for hurting us now in this mortal life, he might, conceivably, have equally good reason for continuing the same process afterward, in death. Clarity will only come by first asking ourselves, "What do the Scriptures say?" And second, from our answer to why he hurts us now, what he intends us to achieve by it in this life and beyond.

Was Christ Ever In Man's Position?

It is often helpful in dealing with such questions to find out whether Christ the man was ever in the same position as we in regard to suffering. If he was, then the

investigation of what suffering achieved in him will, perhaps, provide the answer as to what it is supposed to achieve in us.

Accordingly, looking at one of the most obvious cases of Christ's suffering—the cross—may help to solve the problem. God the Father remained “passive” while millions of Jews, his own people, were gassed in brutal cynicism, just as he “stood passively by,” as it were, while men crucified his own beloved Son.

To make matters worse, the Scriptures say that this brutal act was the culmination of the prophecy that Christ was the Lamb of God slain from the foundation of the world. Thus, the cruel cross was an eternally foreseen event — an event which God presided at eternally in an apparently passive manner in that he did not stop it. Therefore, the hurting of the beloved one must have been consistent with God's eternal character. In fact, God himself suffered, for he was in Christ as he suffered (2 Cor. 5:19), so God was actually not just passive during this event. He actively suffered.

The Cross And God's Love

This means that if the central doctrine of the Christian faith, the cross, is true, then it is obviously consistent with God's eternal love to hurt those he loves best, including himself, even to the point of what we would call barbarism, for the cross is barbaric.

Whichever way we look we find the same picture in principle. Christ on the eternal cruel cross and a so-called God of love behind him and, indeed, in him. Humanity and biology for millennia "under the harrow" too, and yet, allegedly, according to the Scriptures, a God of love behind us, who is until now entirely passive at the spectacle. Confronted with this situation, what Lewis feared was not so much a loss of belief in God at all with its concomitant victory of pure materialism in him. That solution would have been too easy, for it would have meant that a simple overdose of sleeping pills at any time could have gotten him out from "under the harrow" forever. Far too simple! What

worried Lewis was that man and biology might be trapped, as it were, in a laboratory in which God might be the eternal vivisector and we the rats!⁵ Lewis says that the despair in which the Son of God died when he cried out, "My God, why hast thou forsaken me?"⁶ might have been the result of Christ finding out that the cross was, in reality, a carefully baited laboratory trap which sprang at death and from which there was no escape after God had lured him into it.

Looked at dispassionately, surely even a fallen person like myself, possessing scarcely a trace of the love I attribute to a God of love, could not have stood passively by while they crucified him — or gassed millions of Jews. But then, if we take that view, God must be morally inferior — even to me — which is completely nihilistic. We shall have to scrap that thought too, for it leads straight to the destruction of all rational thought on the subject.

Of course God is more compassionate than I. But then why was he so

relentlessly passive at the cross? Why doesn't he relent at the millennia of human and biological agony?

Hurting In Order To Heal

Might the key to the sore problem be found in the following considerations: Can we allow that to do good there are occasions when we must do that which looks as though it were bad? Put another way, can we hurt to heal? Obviously we can allow that, for every good surgeon and dentist does so regularly and routinely. If, every time I flinched, gripped the dentist's chair, or drew back my head in pain at the relentless drill, the dentist were to stop and end the torture by filling up the still dirty cavity with amalgam, he would be less than a good dentist. He would not be being good, kind or loving to his patient if he were anything but absolutely unrelenting in his thoroughness in inflicting this therapeutic suffering. We would all be in trouble again in no time if he did relent. And then all the pain he had inflicted in earlier drillings would have been in vain.

He has to be apparently passive to the pain he is causing. Does he seem devoid of feeling? In reality, of course, his passiveness to suffering, his apparent lack of feeling and his relentlessness are merely motivated by common sense and consideration for his patient, even though the intolerable pain might persuade me otherwise.

For anyone who has undergone a molar root treatment, two further points will emerge or throw light on this problem. The bacterial infection not only causes excruciating pain, but the toxins released into the blood will poison the patient to such an extent that his very consciousness may become clouded. He may scarcely know what he is doing because of the pain and poison. Then the dentist begins work with his awful drill. The pain becomes more excruciating until the center of infection is reached. Then the poison pressure is released, and immediate relief is felt, though it is not yet complete. As soon

as no more poison is being released into the blood, the head begins to clear and the pain to subside.

First, then, in order to remove the hurt of decay, sometimes more pain has to be inflicted — worse than that of the original sickness. But the worst pain acts therapeutically on the first pain and purges it away. Second, only when the basic trouble begins to be cured does clarity of thought return.

The Scriptural Position

Scripture teaches, in essence, precisely this view on the meaning of suffering. The fall introduced the “decay” of humanity and nature resulting in the hurt which afflicts us. To cure this festering mess, the Bible says a good but relentless surgeon is needed to drill and drill until reality is too horrible to bear, until flesh and blood can no longer take it — until we believe we are forsaken by God and man. The Bible describes in detail both the setting in of the decay and its radical, but painful cure. Our species has

decayed from its original state and become, as it were, a lower or decayed species, as I have described elsewhere.⁷ The cure requires radical and drastic treatment involving, first of all, the reaching of the "focal point of the infection," and then the "removal of the deformities caused by decay." Christ's death and resurrection "reached the focal point" of the trouble, as it were. But the "deformities of the decay" have also to be corrected, and that takes time and can be expected to be painful.

One of these "deformities" is connected with the "clouding of the intellectual and rational processes" which accompanies the fall. The apostle described them in Romans 1 as a "darkening of the mind" so that the normal logical thought processes for which we were designed become garbled. One of the by-products of suffering is seen here. For although suffering and toxins may "knock us silly," the removal of the latter can bring clarity of thought. It is a fact that sin darkens the mind. The corollary that redemption and holiness enlighten the mind is also true.

For salvation not only redeems us from a lost eternity; it also redeems us from a lost, clouded, befuddled consciousness at present. By taking away our sin, we become saved for eternity. But we must not forget that this same saving process brings light and radiance to the heart and the intellect right now, the process being one of growth — growth in this life.

Accurate Surgery Or Wholesale Butchery?

Can the skilled, accurately aimed work of the dentist on a tooth with its concomitant pain and healing, be compared with the wild, undisciplined, purely destructive agony which afflicts much of mankind today? Here again, for any satisfactory answer, we must turn back to the archetype of all barbarous suffering, namely, the cruel cross.

Is it possible to believe that when wicked men, inspired by hatred and jealousy, decided to take Jesus, hold a mock trial, scourge him, display him all night for the raucous amusement of the troops and

then finally drive iron stakes through his hands and feet, raising him on a cross to bleed and suffocate to death — can we reasonably hold that such a performance was the work of a skilled surgeon in his efforts to cure the world of its disease?

The Exact Therapy Of The Cross

The Christian position is frankly that this was the case: that God, with the butchery of the cross, did cure the world of its disease; that the cross was the work of a skilled surgeon, even though it looked from the human point of view like the exclusively destructive and adventitious work of the ribald Roman soldiers and hateful Pharisees. It looks so very much like this that the cross was considered by the Greeks to be so unworthy of Divinity that it was a sheer "scandal." But the fact is, outward appearances may deceive.

The reason for this deception is simple. Outwardly wicked men put him to death and that was all that man ever saw of the process. But behind the scenes the great surgeon did an unseen work through

Christ's suffering. Christ took into his own body the very "virus" which was at the root of man's sickness — the turning of man's back upon the only good one and his perfect will. The Bible says that this turning is "sin." It is as though Christ in his death took the organism of decay (sin) away from me, as well as the toxic products of decay (sins) and allowed the organism to be cultured in his body until it killed him. A parasite may kill the host organism, as when the influenza virus kills the man it lives on as a parasite. But in killing the host it also kills itself at the same time. So Christ took on the causative organism (sin) together with its toxins (sins) so that mankind could be freed from both by embracing his act.

This was the secret surgery or therapy which went on unseen to the human eye when they crucified him. Thus, the senselessness of the cross is only superficial — superficial to the uninitiated. Its senselessness becomes sense to those who

probe to the bottom of the mystery and find that he did, in fact, bear their sin and sins in his own body on the tree.

Christ at Calvary reversed the process of rejecting God's known will by turning to, embracing and doing God's known will, even though it meant his own suffering and death. Man's act in turning away from God was reversed by Christ when he embraced God for us anew with his will. However, he embraced not only the basic cause of the ill — the turning away — but he took on himself the consequences, the "metabolic products," as it were, of that fatal wrong choice. He took my sickness and my sicknesses on himself. No one knows just how he accomplished this, just what mechanism he used. All we know is that we could not do it, for none of us could die in a valid way before God for the sin of another. The Father gave his permission and command to Christ to lay down his life as a ransom for many. And Christ obediently did just that. The man Christ reversed Man's disobedience.

The Scriptures teach one other point on the meaning of suffering. Hebrews 5:8 teaches that even the Son of God learned obedience by the things he suffered. If the suffering of the dreadful Cross produced positive results in the Son of God in this way, perhaps we are justified in thinking that even dreadful butchery of this son may not be entirely negative in its effects even in our own case.

A Less Ugly Way?

This is, I suppose, the legal way of looking at the therapy Christ accomplished for me at the cross. As such, it is of vast importance, providing, as it does, the basis of salvation from the guilt of sin for eternity. Some will say it is horrible. It is. To think that God could find no other method than a bloody cross, cruel iron nails through his hands and feet, before he could redeem me from Adam's fatal mistake, fills me with dismay. Surely a more genteel, aesthetically acceptable method could have been found for such a momentous piece of therapy.

This brings us to the second point we must make on this subject. It concerns the blood, the sweat and the desolation of the cross of Calvary, in short, the ugliness and horror of such a piece of restorative therapy. The utter cruelty of it shocks even wicked men. Let us look, then, at this second great problem of the cross — its ugliness.

It is written of Christ: "In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard for his godly fear. Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered; and being made perfect he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him."⁷

This is an almost incredible statement for the writer of the letter to the Hebrews to have made. The Son of God had always been perfect from eternity until he came into time at the incarnation. During the incarnation he was without sin and therefore still perfect. What the

writer is teaching here will answer our question as to why God chose such a cruel method of redemptive therapy.

Made Perfect

The process of "being made perfect" referred to here means, in this context, being "made mature." If a child is perfect in mind and body, there is nothing we can complain about. But his perfection as a child needs to grow into the mature perfection of an adult. This process is one of growth in body, mind and experience. There is no quick way around it. To be genuine, it must be gone through experimentally.

This is exactly what Christ went through as a man. He was perfect from a child onward. But the Bible says he grew in wisdom and stature — that is, he matured by his experience as a man. Even though he was the second Person of the Trinity, he was perfected by growing up as a man, for he gathered actual experience of manhood which he lacked experimentally before the incarnation. He certainly

knew all about manhood before he became a man, because he was omniscient. But now he experienced manhood in the body — and matured or became experienced, and therefore perfected, in it.

Now notice what some of this manhood experience involved for Christ — something he, as God, had not experienced as a man before: “In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death.” It was the fight between the will to be obedient and the terrible reality of a bloody death on the tree. Here we have anxiety, anguish and suffering — right up to bloody sweat — in anticipation of the abyss of such a death. He matured as a man by the experience of anguished prayer in faith to him who could deliver him. We are assured that he was heard because of his godly fear. But he was only saved from death by going down through death and thus being led out of it after tasting it.

The result, then, of this seemingly unreasonable and cruel death of the cross

and the death which preceded it was that although he was a Son, yet he learned obedience through what he suffered. Of course, he had always been obedient to the Father's will — the two wills were always congruent and the Father loved the Son and the Son the Father. But here was a new experience of the anguish of facing death such as all creatures, but not God, face. The God of life was to die for all his creatures and share all their ugly experiences.

This anguish and suffering of the cross and the preceding events demonstrated that Christ was perfectly obedient to the Father in all things. The experience of the unnameable pain, anguish and despair of the cross did something to the incarnate Son of God which would have been impossible before the incarnation. The discipline, the setting of his face as a flint to go to Jerusalem to face it all, the refusal of even the analgesic (the myrrh) before the nails were driven through him, all that perfected even him, the Son of God — as Man. Thus, the fact of the cross laid

down the legal basis for our salvation, but the bloody cross showed what suffering and anguish can do if accepted as Jesus accepted them. His death was expiatory for sin. But the manner of his death served at the same time as a teacher of obedience to God the Man; it was a maturer, a perfecter of the perfect one. If the Son of God as man was matured in his experience and learned obedience by it, then we find yet another secret, hidden element in the mode of "therapy" God introduced by his Son to cure the creation of its fatal malady.

It will be obvious then, that, purely legally, Christ's bare death — by any method — would have secured our salvation for eternity. However, it was, perhaps, not immediately obvious why such a shocking and barbarous route to death needed to be taken — a route which made the cross a scandal to the Greeks and a stumbling block to the Jews. No wonder so few of the Greeks or Jews could under-

stand it without the extra information given on the subject of suffering by the New Testament — and by experience too.

Suffering — Not Senseless

Thus, the anguish and suffering of the cross are not senseless. They are refined, even though drastic, therapy, hidden to the eyes of the mortal man in general. But their function teaches us why the whole Bible is full of references to pain, suffering and anguish. Every person who embraces the death of Christ (and his resurrection) as his basis for eternal salvation is warned to expect, as a matter of routine, sufferings of some sort. Christ having suffered in the flesh, he is told, is warning us to arm ourselves with the same mind — that is, to be on the lookout for the squalls of suffering which certainly await the consistent Christian.⁸ In giving us salvation, Christ suffered. In accepting that salvation, suffering will certainly find us out.

Further, we are told that the disciple is not above his Master even in these

matters.⁹ This means that, in this context, if the perfection or maturation of the Master could not be effected without the anguish of suffering, neither can the maturation or perfection of the disciple be accomplished by any other means. The Christian who thinks he can get through without this sort of perfecting is living in a fool's paradise. The disciple is not above his Master even in learning matters.

The New Testament is full of teaching of this kind, teaching which is seldom even touched upon today, for by its very nature it is unpopular to the natural human. Paul the apostle, when writing to the Philippians, informed them that, "It has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake."¹⁰ Surely it would have been unnecessary for Paul to have told the Philippians that it had been granted them not only to believe but also to suffer if just believing without suffering was an ideal state. Clearly, no one wants suffering. But, in the light of the above it must be a special privilege. Christ

did not relish it. He sweated blood in anticipation of it. Yet he endured it as a privilege in view of the glory of the maturity gained by it.

This means, again, that even for us mortals "senseless" suffering need not be pointless. It may be more than the mere adventitious agony produced in a mortal body of flesh and blood. It can be the gateway to special results in our characters. In any case, it is poor policy to avoid suffering by disobedience, for Christ embraced trials and suffered because of obedience. It is the Christian path to try to follow the same policy. For by doing so Christ has been matured and exalted by the Father to his right hand. The Father has committed the entire government of the world into Christ's capable hands — hands rendered mature and fit for the job by being obedient even to letting them be pierced at the cross.

Is it because the fruit of suffering is so little known in the Western churches that we have so few "giants" in the land today?

In the East the total number of Christians has been reduced greatly by suffering. But the proportion of "giants," mature Christians, has certainly increased there.

Promised Tribulation

The Bible — both the Old and the New Testament — is crammed with references to suffering, anguish, tribulation, grief, trial and affliction.¹¹ For example, there is this rather neglected text by the apostle Paul: "But whatever gain I had, I counted a loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as refuse, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own, based on law, but that which is through faith in Christ...that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that if possible I may attain the resurrection (out) from (among) the dead."¹²

The Reason Why

It is clear from the letter to the Romans that Paul knew and experienced salvation on the basis of a gift of God and not on the basis of any works he had done. Nothing he could do could save him from the penalty of sin. On the Damascus road he had learned that his own works could not help him but that Christ's work could and did. Why, then, does Paul now insist so much on the value of the work of suffering he had done in losing everything for Christ's sake? Those losses would never save him.

As we read the cited passage carefully it becomes obvious that Paul is referring to the value of suffering and losses in learning the surpassing worth of knowing Christ. He is referring to a process which can only be described as one of Christian maturity or perfection. He suffered the loss of every privilege which he had possessed as a well-respected Pharisee in order to be obedient to Christ. No doubt, this caused anguish. But his losses were

not only abstract. He was whipped, imprisoned, mishandled, shipwrecked and generally maltreated as he went off scouring the world for Christ's sake. He couples these experiences with the greater experience which resulted directly from knowing the surpassing worth of Christ. Most of us Western Christians know little of this. Is it because we have not sought out the only maturing process known in Scripture leading to this knowledge — and to Christ? Paul's obedience, like Christ's obedience, in suffering while doing the will and Word of God is the key to such depth of experience.

But more about the maturing process is to be discovered in Philippians 3. Christ was exalted to power because he was fitted for it by the things he obediently suffered. Paul says in effect precisely the same of himself and his own exaltation. For he couples his loss and his suffering with a capacity to take part in what he calls the "out-resurrection" (exanastasis) which he regarded not as a matter of course for every Christian but as that

which depends on Christian maturity. We all know — as do the Muslims — that all of us, small and great, wicked and good, rich and poor, will be resurrected at the great day of final judgement to receive the things done in our bodies. But before the day of general “anastasis” there will be an “exanastasis” of rising of the dead, not in general, but in a special resurrection. This will be at the time of the return of our Lord in glory to set up his kingdom on earth and reign. Christ is looking for men and women among his redeemed who have allowed themselves to be matured for this high office — by means of the same process by which he was made fit for it — by anguish and suffering.

Apparently Paul’s aim was to accept the same type of loss and suffering that his Master had gone through in order to become prepared himself for high office with Christ. All this is based on the free gift of salvation by the blood of Christ. But in building upon this sure basis of free salvation, a maturing or a perfection process occurs by means of suffering in the will of

God, foreseen both by Christ and by Paul. Paul's attitude of heart is confirmed by his instruction to Timothy: "If we have died with him we shall also live with him; if we endure, we shall also reign with him; if we deny him, he also will deny us."¹³ This surely clinches the matter. The Christian owes his redemption to the free gift of God. But he owes his degree of exaltation to close knowledge of the surpassing worth of Christ and close association with him and his purposes in his kingdom, and to the maturation processes which fitted even the Son for his supreme office in the kingdom. The experiences of suffering, endurance and anguish in obedience to the will of God, no matter how outwardly senseless and adventitious they may appear, are the therapeutic instruments God used on his Son and uses on all his redeemed who declare themselves willing for the process.

The same process produces not only the surpassing knowledge of his will, but it also makes us useful to others. "For because he has himself been tempted and

has suffered, he is able to help those who are tempted."¹⁴ On this basis, who could be better fitted to help mankind than the Son of Man who has been through the same kind of temptation — though far more acute? This establishes a bond of confidence between us and him. He understands because he has experienced the fire of anguish. Therefore he can help us. Our lot and his as mortals were once congruous. It gives me confidence towards him. If I suffer, I can help those who are suffering, even as Christ has helped me.

Perfection

This leads us to the third point. The first point was that Christ died and rose again to justify and redeem us, giving us the basis for fellowship with the holy God. The second point was that his sufferings and endurance were the means of qualification and maturation for his exaltation to the right hand of God the Father. In a parallel manner, the sufferings of Christians are calculated to mature them for

high office in his kingdom. The third point is also directly concerned with suffering and its consequences. Peter develops the subject in saying: "Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same thought (mind or will), for whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, so as to live the rest of the time in the flesh no longer by human passions but by the will of God."¹⁵

Peter was referring to "suffering in the flesh," which he says, leads to ceasing from sin in the flesh. But the same principle also applies to matters not directly concerned with the flesh, as he also confirms: "For one is approved if, mindful of God, he endures pain while suffering unjustly."¹⁶

This simply means that any discomfort we have to endure because of our faithfulness to God's will eventually lead to our being "approved." In fact, Peter says that as Christ suffered the same kind of discomfort for our sakes, so he left us "an

example, that you should follow in his steps.”¹⁷ This, then, is the line of action to which we “have been called.”

Therefore, according to Peter, suffering leads to ceasing from sin and approval from God. Is it then any wonder that, after his death and resurrection, Christ asked the disciples questions that bring the whole problem of suffering into focus: “Was it not necessary that Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?”¹⁸ “The Christ should suffer and on the third day arise from the dead.”¹⁹ The same topic was the subject of Paul’s three-week long argument with the Jews in Thessalonica: “And Paul went in, as was his custom, and for three weeks he argued with them from the Scriptures, explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead.”²⁰

Among other things, suffering made Christ “approved.”

It is generally conceded that Christ’s death is basic to the Christian’s salvation. But the suffering type of death is not usually emphasized. Perhaps it is too

barbaric for our cultured society to bear. Regardless of our reactions to the awfulness of death on the cross, God chose it in order to bring to mankind a full salvation — not only from the guilt of sin but also from its power, not only to save us from eternal damnation but also to demonstrate to us how to become approved in the same way that Christ became approved. In fact, it was to teach us how to cease from sin.

Rejoicing In Suffering

Paul sums it all up: “So we do not lose heart. Though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed every day. For this slight momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison.”²¹ Clearly, Christ’s death and resurrection are the cornerstones of any salvation that will take us to heaven. But Paul is talking about something built on the foundation of salvation as a superstructure. It is an eternal, incomparable weight of glory founded upon salvation, God’s free gift.

And it is our suffering, borne in the will of God, which makes us approved for incomparable glory, just as afflictions and suffering brought approval to Christ after he had patiently and triumphantly borne them. Temporary afflictions exchanged for an incomparable weight of glory! Paul considered it a bargain. So he acted upon it immediately!

A Possible Misunderstanding

Of course, one might say that if suffering is so useful and well rewarded in the will of God, then let us afflict and scourge our fellowmen all we can and seek suffering ourselves. We are doing them a favor by hurting them or ourselves. This seems to echo the old argument: Let us sin willfully so that grace may abound. Let us seek and provoke suffering! God forbid! The dentist does not willfully or wantonly bore holes anywhere and everywhere in our teeth to stop the future possibility of decay. God is the surgeon, so let him operate just where it is necessary. He may and will use wicked men as his scalpel. He

has promised to punish them for their evil intentions because they afflict others just for the sake of hurting and killing. Though he uses the same evil for his purposes, that doesn't give us the right to sin so that grace may abound by hurting others or ourselves unnecessarily.

To indiscriminately inflict pain is wanton. Jesus never regarded pain and suffering as good things in themselves, for he abolished them by healing on many occasions. He also told us to do the same. The Scripture speaks of death itself as the last enemy. Pain falls into the same category. Pain and death entered into the world by the fall, when man turned his back upon God. The point is that God reverses the evils of pain and death to produce a glorious result — to glorify his Son and to glorify man when they both withstand and endure pain and death in doing his will. This is how God triumphs over evil — not by “stopping” it, but by using it to his greater glory.

Gentling Process

A minister wrote to me on the subject of the meekness of Jesus, pointing out that the word meek is often misunderstood. In the context used in the Sermon on the Mount the word translated by "meek" really means "gentled" or "broken in" as those terms are applied to horses trained to work in a harness. The minister recounted how, as a boy, he had worked on a farm and helped with "gentling" horses, breaking them in for farm work. Later the horses were often used for pulling out tree stumps prior to preparing wasteland for arable purposes.

The untamed wild horses were useless for doing the skilled work necessary for removing tree stumps. They had to be thoroughly "tamed" before they could work constructively with other horses in teams. The taming or "gentling" process was a prerequisite for useful work. Once they had been submitted to the sometimes harsh process of breaking in, which involved punishment as well as rewards,

they worked productively for the rest of their lives and obviously enjoyed it thoroughly. As their experience grew, the reins could be left on their necks and they would go by themselves from tree stump to tree stump, assume the correct position, wait for the chains to be hitched to the trunk, and then with all their strength — nipping and nudging one another in the process — pull out the stump. If a stump did not come up at the first pull they would move to a more favorable angle and try again.

Affliction and suffering can work as a “gentling” process, fitting us for God’s work in the present world and the next. This is the true meaning of the word “meek” as Jesus used it. What if the abysmal suffering of mankind and of nature is now being used in God’s good hands to “gentle” us all — even as it “gentled” his Son? The stakes are high indeed. Suffering makes us kind to others who suffer. But what if a bloody war, a rule of tyranny is really working out an incomparable weight of glory for all those who

allow themselves to be “gentled” and disciplined thereby? If this is so, it would be a fatal blow for the despair and nihilism into which our generation is so obviously falling. If eternal glory were to result (and the Bible says it will), then we could, with the Christians of old, rejoice in suffering and jubilate with the apostle Paul: “We rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts.”²²

Again, Why All The Barbarism And Cruelty?

Some time ago I had the pleasure of discussing this and related questions with a U.S. Air Force chaplain. We came to two main conclusions, which, as we shall see, throw light on the above problem:

1. We all have some sort of freedom to choose among the paths in life which are made available to us. But we never have any freedom of choice as to the conse-

quences of any path we choose. For these consequences are the built-in properties of the way which we may freely have chosen. For example, though I choose the way of cheating in examinations, I cannot choose the consequences of cheating. They are built into the way known as cheating. Similarly, I may freely choose to abuse drugs — it's entirely my own choice. But, having chosen this way, I cannot choose the consequences of drug abuse such as drug dependence, liver necrosis, delirium tremens or hallucinations. They may be built into the path of drug abuse. The choice of the way is free, but not its consequences.

Man chose and still chooses to turn his back on the only good — God. Before doing this he was automatically part of paradise, for paradise was everywhere that God was. Having chosen good (God), paradise could not be chosen — it was part of the way with God, paradise was “built in” it. Of course, paradise included eternal and abundant life. However, later, in turning his back on God, man refused

the way of paradise and chose the alternative way built into the choice of following Satan. The built-in consequences included such matters as pain, sorrow and death. Thus man found that after making his perfectly free choice for Satan, he automatically began to reap the consequences of this choice.

What can be done about the situation? To get man out from "under the harrow," to "pull the tines" out of his flesh now that they are there is painful too. Piercing flesh hurts in the first place, but so does pulling out the tines.

2. Suffering is not necessarily a judgment. Christ has assured us on that point.²³ In a way, suffering was a judgment — the judgment following a wrong choice. But curing the consequences of the fall is painful too. When we suffer, the pain may be either punitive or curative. It may also be a mixture of the two. Until we get behind the scenes of the material life, we shall probably never be able to sort out the two. Nevertheless, both kinds of agony can serve to heal us.

Importance Of The Stakes

There is just one more point to be made in dealing with our problem. Probably few of us know what we really believe until we are asked to suffer some inconvenience or even pain for it. How much are we willing to suffer for what we really believe? The length we go along that road shows the depth of our belief. The Bible holds up Christ as an example — he suffered unto death because he totally believed in redeeming us. Some, like Falstaff, run away to fight another day, believing that discretion is the better part of valor. Surely such persons have shallow faith in what they fight for!

Christ loved his own, right up to the cruel death on the cross. This fact establishes forever his absolute faith in his calling to redeem the world. Second, it establishes the degree of his love toward those whom he purposes to redeem.

Therefore, it is obvious that suffering may act as a sieve or a filter to sift out the lighter elements of love and faith and separate them from the deeper ones. Suf-

fering may show us what we really do believe as compared to what are only words and hot air. The little suffering that I personally have experienced has certainly shown me the shallowness of my faith in many directions. It produces a clarity of thought in these matters which is vital, for it leads me to repentance at the sight of my own shallowness in eternal matters. Therefore, suffering can act as the filter I personally need to sort out the wheat from the chaff in my own dealings with God, the good one. Fire must separate the dross from the gold in normal refining processes. But after enduring the fire, the gold is pure gold, though it may be less in volume than before the fiery refining process. Similarly, strong winds blow away the chaff and leave the corn.

The Joy Of Relief

In C.S. Lewis' famous Screwtape Letters the "Law of Undulation" is used to describe the ups and downs to which all humans are subject. If we experience

heights of joy, we shall also experience depths of misery. This is a perfectly normal process to which all flesh is heir.

This idea may be applied to our interpretation of the suffering of mankind. The person who has experienced the horrors of great pain is the most thankful, positively grateful, for any periods in which he experiences less or no pain. Such joy is unknown to the man who has not experienced pain.

The apostle John in the Revelation speaks of this type of exultation when he describes the arrival in heaven of those "who came out of great tribulation."²⁴ By the very contrast, that which they had suffered made their joy the greater.

It may be legitimately asked why the fall of man should have of necessity brought the suffering and death of which the Bible speaks. One can understand it having brought suffering and death to Adam. But why to the rest of the world? It does not help much to maintain that Adam was the head of visible creation which fell and that it fell with him. The creation under Adam

was not rational as was Adam and therefore could not possibly bear the guilt that he, being rational, had to bear.

Our answer to this question really depends on our conception of the state of nature before the fall of Adam. When the Bible maintains that death and decay did not exist before Adam's fall, it is really introducing a concept entirely beyond the power of mortal man today to conceive of. For the idea of no death and decay cuts clean across our total experience of the laws of thermodynamics, particularly the second law. It implies no ageing — no entropy increase. The second law states that although the total energy in the cosmos remains constant, the amount of energy available to do useful work in the cosmos is always getting smaller with the passage of time. As I have pointed out elsewhere, this again brings with it the concept that chaos, disorder and decay are always on the increase with the passage of time in our total cosmos.²⁵

Illness, decay, suffering and death can be regarded as accompanying symp-

toms of entropy increase. In fact, we measure the passage of time itself, in the last analysis, by the rate of entropy increase — how fast a clock, atomic or otherwise, runs down. The corollary holds equally well that without time there could be no increase in entropy. The same meaning conveyed by “timelessness” and “no entropy increase” could be communicated by saying that an “eternal” or changeless state had been reached.

The creation of Adam, as described in Genesis, corresponds roughly to this external state of affairs. For we are introduced to him in Genesis not as a growing baby or as a maturing young man but as an ageless person. Even Eve, produced from Adam’s flesh, was apparently ageless too — she was, at least, no infant when she appeared to Adam. In their innocent state there is no record of their having children, although Eve certainly had the sexual organs of a woman and Adam had those of a man. If they lived in a pre-fall world where no decay, no death and no second law of thermodynamics ruled, then

reproduction there was not necessary — and, indeed, would probably have been an anachronism.

A consequence of all this is that a species living in a world in which the second law did not exist must have been vastly different from what we would expect today where the second law reigns supreme. For example, Adam before the fall could walk and talk freely with the Eternal, whose infinite dimensions he experienced as a matter of course. Traces of this ability are still seen in Moses and some of the prophets who moved in the eternal realm much more easily than we do. Christ did, too.

If these considerations concerning Adam's state before his fall are correct, then everything in that primeval state must have been permanent or "eternal" — without time, entropy increase or decay, as they are in heaven or paradise. If the fall took place in such conditions of eternity and these eternal conditions had remained after the fall, this would have meant that the fall and its consequences are eternal

too, and therefore irreversible. Adam would have turned his back eternally upon God and good, and his chances of returning would have been ruined forever. This is probably the state of the lost angels and Satan, who, living in eternity where no change in time can be, are lost forever.

Presumably, then, for this reason God threw Adam and Eve, and the creation over which they had been set, out of eternity — and its permanence in paradise — into time with its decay, sorrow and death. God introduced the second law, the law of impermanence and death, as a measure to counteract the “freezing” of Adam’s fall. So he rendered Adam’s kingdom and its sin subject to time, the passage of thus providing a way back into the kingdom of love for which he had created man.

Death and decay became fully developed as a means of return when Christ used death to overcome the fall on the cross. This made the second law, and its accompanying culmination in death, the grand highway back from the fall to the

kingdom, thus confirming what we have said above about its significance. Of course, the introduction of death and decay to biology introduced the necessity of reproduction, which did not exist in the realm of the eternal — just as it does not exist in the realms of angels, who are neither married nor given in marriage. Reproduction is a consequence, at least to some extent, of the introduction of suffering and death.

The undoing of the consequences of the fall is best seen in Christ's deed on the cross. On dealing with the cause of the fall, in embracing God's will, Christ in the flesh became Christ the immortal man (the last Adam), rejoicing at the right hand of God. The undoing of the causes of the fall undid the consequences of the fall. Man, first of all in Christ, then took on the properties and attributes of the original created species known as man. He could again move in time and eternity with equal facility, as demonstrated by his meeting with the disciples on the Emmaus road after his resurrection. The same process (the re-

opening of paradise) is open to all who wish for it and seek it in the same way that Christ did.

The conclusion we draw, then, as far as our original question is concerned, is that time and its concomitant decay, suffering and death were introduced to the whole of Adam's cosmos so as to permit a way back for Adam's cosmos. If Adam and his kingdom had remained in eternity, then Adam's sin would have remained forever "frozen." Seen in this light, the tortures of our present time seem to be necessary mercies consistent with a God intent on restoring to man and his cosmos a kingdom of love, and intent on restoring to Adam his own image.

The undoing of creation was accompanied by the introduction of the second law and its concomitant death and decay. This is really the opposite of a creation and its concomitant decrease in entropy. The abolition of the second law, suffering and death, is, in reality the same thing as re-creation and is spoken of as such in the Revelation of John.²⁶

Chapter VII

Predestination & Free Will

No discussion of the implications of free will would ever be complete without mentioning the problem of predestination or "free will." The whole subject is a difficult one and ought to be treated by a theologian rather than a mere scientist. However, this book has argued very heavily from the stand point of free will, so it could be deemed biased, perhaps even tendentious, if we fail to mention that the so-called opposite doctrine of predestination or "no free will" does play an important role too. This was emphasized by Calvin, of course.

Can free will exist side by side with predestination or “no free will” without the two concepts mutually canceling one another out or producing nonsense? The Scriptures teach that they can and do exist side by side without annihilating one another. A comparison of a few texts, as set out in Table 1, will serve to confirm the above concept:

Passages Teaching Free Will

Thus it appears that the Scriptures do teach that man is able to say no to God, with all the temporal and eternal consequences of such an action. But the same comparison will also show that man is exhorted to say yes to God and can do so. Notice something new here. When a man has said yes to God he finds that he was predestined to do so. Man was not necessarily predestined to say no, although Judas was known prophetically as the son of perdition (foreknowledge). The point is, man is exhorted and wooed to say yes. But when he accepts the invitation he finds that he was predestined to do so and

TABLE 1
Biblical Predestination
and
Free Will

Passages Teaching Free Will	Passages Teaching Predestination
<u>"For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life"</u> (John 3:16)	<u>"You did not choose me but I chose you....I chose you out of the world"</u> (John 15:16,19)
Also the following:	Also the following:
Mat. 7:24, 10:32-33, 11:28, 12:50 Luke 6:47, 12:8 John 4:13, 11:26, 12:46	John 13:18 Acts 13:17 1 Cor. 1:27 Eph. 1:4 2 Thes. 2:13

many more texts convey a similar meaning that God's eternal counsel had foreseen (not determined) the affirmative decision. In the case of Judas there was a foreknown no, and in the case of all Christians a predestined yes which emerges when they look back on their free-will decision!

Such a position of free will existing happily side by side with plain predestination obviously cannot be handled by simple logic. From the ordinary human point of view one concept excludes the other. A paradox results. Having recognized this paradoxical situation, we must ask: "Is reality (including the reality of free will or 'no free will') intrinsically paradoxical in itself, or is it our description of reality which is at fault?"

To decide this point the following must be considered: Reality is multidimensional and probably eternal, whereas we are three dimensional and strictly temporal in our present state. Being temporal, we use means of communication which are temporal and limited in scope. We are thus trying to describe a vast,

apparently limitless scheme of reality in terms of a means of communication (language) which is highly restricted, limited, and generally inadequate for the great task demanded of it. To formulate reality, including that of free will and "no free will," in our strictly limited means of description is like trying to describe a probability formula solely in terms of the Arabic digits 1=10 with no algebra.

To illustrate further, light, as we know it, is a reality, a fact. Our eyes appreciate it without any difficulty at all. However, when we are asked to describe the reality of light by means of communication, we stumble upon untold difficulties. For we can, and do, describe light equally well either as corpuscular or as a wave function. It is, however, perfectly logical to say that if light is a wave function then it is certainly not corpuscular in nature. If it is corpuscular, then it is not a wave function. The one description excludes the other in terms of normal logic. Nevertheless, modern physics teaches that we

must regard light as correctly described only in terms of both wave function and corpuscular concepts.

The area of real difficulty is now delineated: Our dilemma with light does not lie in the reality and fact of light itself but in our attempted description of the reality of light in our means of communication. The complexities of light overload our descriptive possibilities, producing apparent paradoxes in the process.

We can try to overcome the apparent contradiction in our description of light by maintaining that light is either a wave function or a particle simply because it cannot, in our logic, be both at the same time. But if we cut out one description at the expense of the other apparently paradoxical one, then we fall into overt error. For this one side of our description is inadequate in describing the reality known as light. The two antipodes are necessary to describe the whole of light. The real paradox lies then in our inadequate language rather than in the reality, light.

Returning to free will and “no free will,” if we were to maintain that the fact of free will cuts out the possibility of predestination or “no free will” simply because, in our view, the two concepts are mutually exclusive, then we commit the same type of error as we would if we maintained that light, being a wave function, cannot be corpuscular. If we go on to insist that free will is not capable of existing in the presence of predestination, we are committing the same error we have noted in parallel circumstances in light theory. The fact is that both free will and predestination express multidimensional reality. But we in our highly restricted view of reality cannot appreciate the fact that the two are congruent and not exclusive. To effect such a “simplification” is to introduce a false picture of reality.

Thus, we maintain that free will is a reality and so is predestination. It is our limited means of description which makes them appear to be mutually exclusive. Reality contains both, and both describe reality. But we must note one important

consequence of this. If free will is a reality, in spite of predestination, then all the consequences of free will described in this book operate in full vigor — in spite of predestination which exists alongside it.

Thus, I know that I, of my own free will, when confronted with Christ, chose not to say no to him. But having said yes to him, I learned afterwards that my yes was, in the eternal counsel of God (ultimate reality) a foreknown and predestined yes. "No" is foreknown but, as far as I know, not predestined in the Bible. To eliminate either free will or predestination is to rob reality of one of its aspects which needs to be described by these terms. It is important to realize the difficulties of description with regard to infinity and eternity — phenomena with which our language and thinking apparatus both deal inadequately. But, obviously, for the purposes of this book the one aspect of the truth, that of free will, had to be emphasized to clarify the message. But it would be tendentious to try to eliminate the other side of the coin. If bona-fide free will

exists, as the Scriptures and experience maintain it does, then it exists in its full force and with all its consequences as outlined.

It will be obvious from the foregoing that, if God courts man's free-will decisions, he is aiming at influencing him for good. This activity is entirely legitimate and does not interfere with our freedom of action.

The Scriptures teach that there is more in this question than merely influencing our wills for good. There is, working against God's Holy Spirit, also a contrary activity striving to influence man for evil. Just as a personal good one (God) courts our will for good, so a personal evil (Satan) courts us for ill. The Bible teaches that men do not fight only against flesh and blood in this life but also against spiritual wickedness in "high places." The stark reality of this fact in the struggle for man's will and man's good is underestimated in this day when the masses of people really believe neither in God nor

the devil. But a whole book would be necessary to attempt to deal adequately with this struggle.

Footnotes

Chapter I

1. Rom. 1:19-20

Chapter II

1. Julian Huxley, ed., The Humanist Frame, p.42
2. Acts 17:2, 18:4, 19, 24:25
3. Cited by Francis Schaeffer, p. 34. Cf. Ps. 30:9-11

Chapter III

1. A.E. Wilder-Smith, Man's Origin, Man's Destiny, Bethany Fellowship, Minneapolis, Minn. 55438, U.S.A. and, The Creation of Life, T.W.F.T. Publishers, Costa Mesa, Ca., 92628
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. The Glorious Koran, Dawood transl., Penguin Classics, New York, 1968. See also Prov. 16:6

Chapter IV

1. F. Schaeffer, (see above), p. 100
2. The Glorious Koran, (see above) p. 115, 167
3. John 3:16

4. R. A. Spitz, The Psychoanalytic Study of the Child, International Universities, New York, 1945, 1:53; 2:113
5. A.E. Wilder-Smith, The Creation of Life (see above)
6. 1 Cor. 1:21

Chapter V

1. Heb. 12:2
2. C.S. Lewis, A Grief Observed, Seabury, New York, 1961, p. 25
3. 2 Cor. 4:17
4. 1 Cor. 13:4-8
5. 1 Tim. 2:4
6. 2 Pet. 3:9
7. John 1:9; Rom. 1:19-21
8. Prov. 8:31
9. John 3:16
10. Mat. 6:33
11. Heb. 3:7-11
12. Heb. 6:4-6
13. Heb. 10:26-30

Chapter VI

1. C.S. Lewis (see above), p. 31
2. Acts 14:22
3. C.S. Lewis (see above), p. 25
4. Ibid., p. 25-26
5. Ibid.
6. Mat. 27:46; cf. Mark 15:34; Ps. 22:1

Footnotes

7. Heb. 5:7-9
8. 1 Pet. 4:1
9. Mat. 10:24
10. Phil. 1:29
11. Mark 8:31; 9:12; Mat. 17:12; Luke 9:22; 17:25; 22:15; 24:26,46; Acts 3:18; 9:16; 17:3; 1 Cor. 12:26; 2 Cor. 1:6; 4:17; Acts 26:23; 2 Tim. 2:12; Mat. 24:9; Col. 1:24; 1 Pet. 5:9; 2 Tim. 1:8; Heb. 11:25,35; Phil. 3:10; Acts 14:22; Rom. 5:3; 8:35; Gal. 3:4; Phil. 1:29; 2 Thes. 1:5; Heb. 2:18; 5:8; 1 Pet. 2:19,21; 3:17-18; 4:1,19.
12. Phil. 3:7-11
13. 2 Tim. 2:11-12
14. Heb. 2:18
15. 1 Pet. 4:1-2
16. 1 Pet. 2:19
17. 1 Pet. 2:21
18. Luke 24:26
19. Luke 24:26
20. Acts 17:2-3
21. 2 Cor. 4: 16-17
22. Rom. 5:3-5
23. Luke 13:4
24. Rev. 7:14
25. A.E. Wilder-Smith, *Man's Origin, Man's Destiny* (see above)
26. Rev. 21

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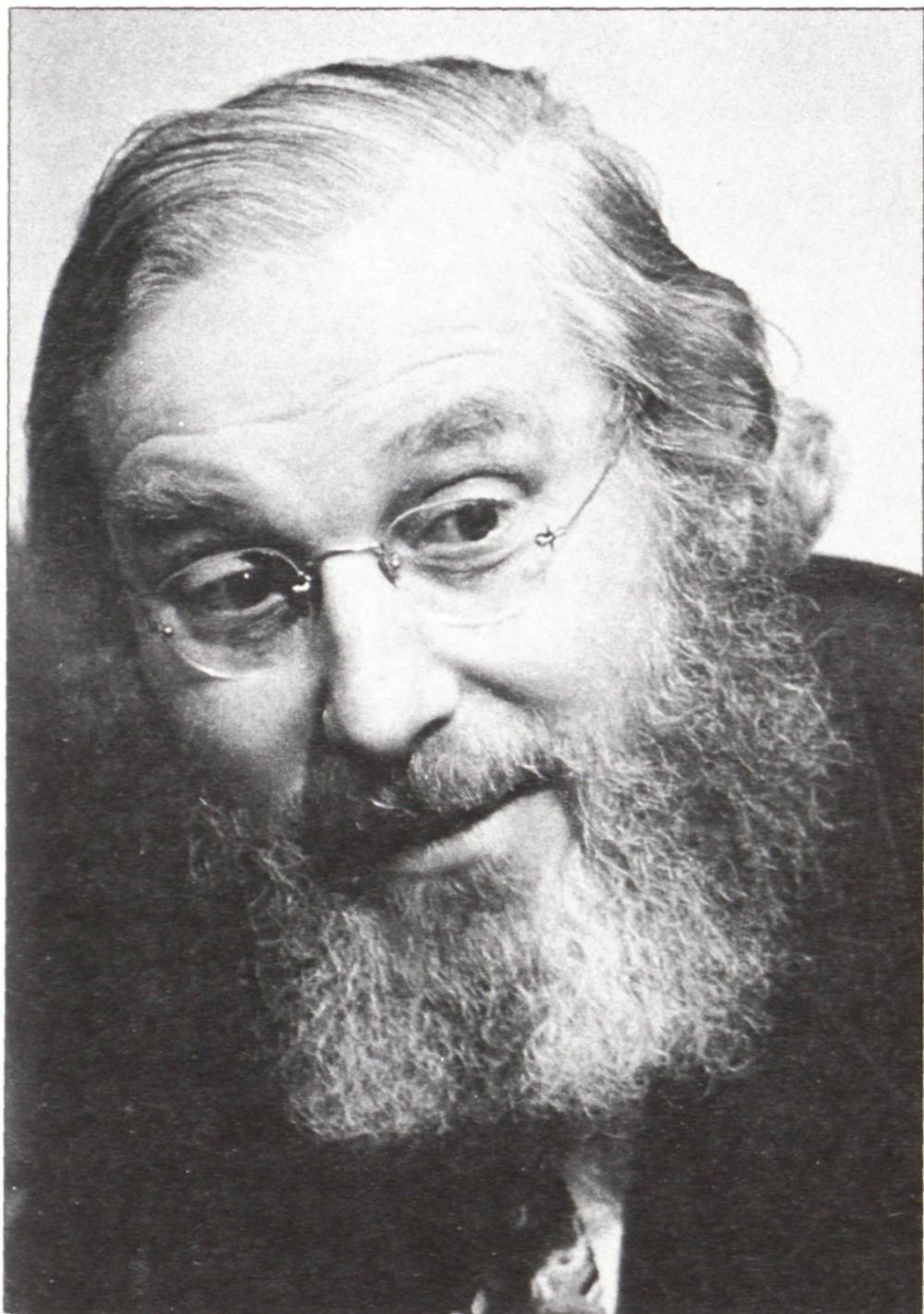
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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

A. E. Wilder-Smith studied natural sciences at Oxford, England. He received his first doctorate in Physical Organic Chemistry at Reading University, England, in 1941. During World War II, he joined the Research department of ICI in England. After the war, he became Countess of Lisburne Memorial Fellow at the University of London. Subsequently, Dr. Wilder-Smith was appointed Director of Research for a Swiss pharmaceutical company. Later he was elected to teach Chemotherapy and Pharmacology at the Medical School of the University of Geneva for which position he received his "habilitation" (the senior examination required for professorial appointments to European continental universities). At Geneva, he earned his second doctorate, followed by a third doctorate from the ETH (a senior university in Switzerland) in Zuerich.

In 1957 - 1958 Wilder-Smith was Visiting Assistant Professor at the Medical Centre of the University of Illinois, 1959 - 1961 Visiting Full Professor of Pharmacology at the University of Bergen Medical School in Norway. After a further two years at the University in Geneva, he was appointed Full Professor of Pharmacology at the University of Illinois Medical Centre. Here he received - in three succeeding years - three "Golden Apple" awards for the best course of lectures, together with four senior lecturer awards for the best series of senior year lectures.

Wilder-Smith is also a well known speaker on many other topics. He is Author and Co-Author of over seventy scientific publications and more than thirty books which have been published in some seventeen languages. His "Man's Origin, Man's Destiny" and "The Creation Of Life" are Christian classics. Other books authored by him include "AIDS: Fact Without Fiction", "Why Does God Allow It?", "He Who Thinks Has To Believe", and "The Natural Sciences Know Nothing of Evolution."

The film series "Origins", which enjoys great popularity in many countries was produced by Dr. Wilder-Smith. He has also produced two new films in the "Origins" series - one on Thermodynamics, and another on Information Theory.

Dr. Wilder-Smith's last Golden Apple award was inscribed, "He made us not only better scientists, but also better men."