

WHY  
DOES  
GOD  
ALLOW  
IT?

and other essays

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Foreword by **R. G. COCHRANE, M.D., F.R.C.P.**



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## CONTENTS

Foreword by R. G. Cochrane, M.D., F.R.C.P.	vii
Why Does God Allow It?	11
1 Introduction	11
2 The Origin of Evil	17
3 Why does God not forbid Evil?	22
4 "What Next?"	32
5 Conclusion	39
The Power of the Resurrection	42
But That Does Not Alter My Attitude to the Lord Jesus Christ . . .	47
Growing in the Knowledge of Jesus Christ	52
Dialectical Christianity	57
A Lower Standard of Living	65
Honey	73
Delilah	80
The Way out of the Trouble	92
A Wholesome Diet	102
On Fellowship	109



## FOREWORD

by R. G. COCHRANE, M.D., (Glas.) F.R.C.P. (Lond.)

**T**ODAY it is frequently considered incongruous that there should be anything in common between the claims of the Bible and modern day science; in fact, the majority of scientists put aside as out-moded and out-dated any alignment between science and religion, and accept this incompatibility without further question, salving an uneasy conscience by separating their religious thinking from their scientific, so that never the twain shall meet! When there is so much discussion with reference to this subject, and, in particular, when the authenticity of Holy Writ is widely doubted, it is refreshing to find a scientist who is both an accepted authority in his own field of investigation and study, and at the same time a convinced and firm believer. Throughout the essays, which Dr. Wilder Smith has gathered together in this book under the challenging title of "Why does God allow it?", there emerges a firm faith and a determination, based on a personal spiritual experience, that there is nothing in the whole universe which cannot be explained by one who has come to God through Jesus Christ as Saviour of the world.

The small book contains seven essays, the first of which is divided into five sections. Each essay deals with a subject which is the concern of many who would like to believe but are unable to accept the inconsistencies

## FOREWORD

which are experienced in this life. The title is most appropriate because it is just this question which so many people ask in the face of suffering, in the face of war, in the face of tragedy of all kinds: "Why does God allow it?" Furthermore, Dr. Wilder Smith does not hesitate to lay his finger on the sore points of modern society, and exposes from time to time the travesty of much which goes by the name of love, but at the same time he has, with deep insight, compared Christ's love for His Church with the tender love of a bridegroom waiting patiently for his bride. Being a man of scientific attainments, he challenges the too-frequently accepted opinion that to be a Christian means to be intelligently third-rate, and the whole impression of these essays leaves with the reader a conviction that, despite the scoffs and jeers of so many scientists, despite the taunts of communism and atheistic political philosophy—it must be remembered that Dr. Wilder Smith has lived very near to such lands—to be a Christian is to be a man with a mind, with a heart of courage, and with a compassion which embraces all conditions of men and society.

I am happy to write this Foreword, for I feel certain that many of those who read this small booklet will arise refreshed in mind and more firm in the conviction that Jesus Christ is the Saviour of the world.



WHY DOES GOD ALLOW IT?  
and other essays



# WHY DOES GOD ALLOW IT?

## I

### INTRODUCTION

“IT really is a mystery to me,” said the professor to a colleague, “how otherwise intelligent people come to say they believe in a good, all-wise, kind and almighty God, whom they call a Person. It really is beyond my comprehension! For such people—and there seem to be quite a few of them—appear to be firmly convinced of their views and imagine somehow that they have even a personal acquaintance with this God of theirs. I can understand to some extent their saying they believe in such a God when they see say a beautiful sunrise in the mountains, or an orchid in full bloom, or even healthy young men and women. But they must be very lacking in intelligence not to see the other side of the picture, which contradicts all that. What about the cat stalking the mouse and playing with it before slowly squeezing its life out of it and then eating it? Is that lovely and kind? What about the young mother dying of cancer, her body stinking of decay before it has reached the coffin? Is that beautiful, a reminder and a witness of the great wisdom and kindness of their God? And what about the agony of the father and the children left behind? Does their God plan all that as well as the sunrises? If He made everything and really is almighty, He *must* have so planned. If so, can He be called in any meaningful

## WHY DOES GOD ALLOW IT?

way, good? What about the atrocities of war, especially of modern war? Think of the millions gassed or otherwise miserably destroyed in concentration camps, many of them His so-called chosen people? Why did a good, loving, kind, almighty God allow such shocking horror? Even otherwise ungodly *men* would have stopped it at once, had they had the power to do so. Yet their God let it go on for years.

“Look into another field, just for a moment,” continued the professor, “and tell me what you think of the refinement in torture we see in nature around us; take, for example, the mechanism for the transmission of malaria, showing what look like signs of careful, thoughtful planning just to plague and torture the host animal. To me the whole thing looks like a remarkable sort of planning both for the good *and* the bad of mankind. No, I cannot believe this religious stuff myself. My intelligence and common sense just will not allow it. By what I can see of it, it looks as though a God or Creator, if He exists, were at the same time good *and* bad, which is, of course, from the viewpoint of human thought, nonsense, nihilism. An *almighty* and *good* God could not show so many evidences of what appear to be thoughtful planned goodness in the universe and at the same time so many signs of cold, calculated sadism; it leads to plain intellectual nihilism. Can we expect anyone just to attempt to imagine such a Supreme Being—extremely wise and good and yet at the same time frightfully vindictive and bad, planning all sorts of plagues and tortures for man and animals? It just does not make sense. And, of course, the old dodge of assuming a Devil to get round this difficulty and to supply the source of all the evil just will

not do. If God were almighty and good, the so-called Devil would be neutralised immediately and so not be able to be the source of evil at all. And if God is not almighty with respect to the Devil and cannot stop him, then the Devil must be a god too, and we are at once reduced to primitive ideas of warring gods in heaven, ideas which, of course, held up intellectual progress for centuries.

"I used to say," he continued with emphasis, "I was an agnostic and therefore did not know anything for sure about these matters. But now I am older, I have come to the conclusion that I am in reality an atheist. I do not believe in any God, either good or bad; such beliefs raise more difficulties than they remove and just complicate matters. Today I just leave such subjects altogether outside my methods of thought. I do not need them to blur my intellectual horizon any more. And, what is more, I do not see how any intellectually minded honest person can believe otherwise."

Is not precisely this the question of many thinking people today? Why is it, if God is almighty—and if He is *God*, He must be just that—why does He not stop all this chaos, all these wars, all the unrighteousness, injustices, misery and illnesses in the world? It is as one student said to me years ago: "If you want me to believe in your God, I shall expect Him first to make a better job of His world!" If He loves us men, as the Bible assures us He does, why does He not put an end to the misery and set up a decent order of things? Is it that He no longer cares for us? If He has forgotten us and no longer cares, why should we care about Him? If He is omnipotent He could, of course,

## WHY DOES GOD ALLOW IT?

change things at once. He is no longer God if He is not omnipotent, and if He is not that, why bother about Him? It is precisely because He allows evil to exist alongside with good that so many become atheists, as indeed in the case of my friend the professor mentioned above.

We ought not to deceive ourselves into thinking that questions like these are particularly modern and that we are very advanced thinkers in raising them. When the thistles and thorns sprang up after the Fall, Adam and Eve could easily have asked the same type of question. Why, indeed, did God allow all this? Did He no longer love us and care for us? Job asked the same questions in his day when catastrophe overtook him and his family. He is God, He could have stopped it, had He wanted to. For surely He must be almighty, being God, and therefore well able to do so. Did He still want to? Did He still care about Job? If not, then why should Job have cared so long about Him and served Him? True, there was still a great deal in both Job's and Adam's world pointing to His care in spite of thistles and thorns and family catastrophes, but the picture was no longer clear, there was now evidence for and against God's love and care when one looked at the world surrounding one. So the same contradiction arose then as now. The question is: "Why should one believe and trust in a good God in the face of all the contradictory evidence?" One physicist put it to me in the following way: "Why does God value *faith* in Him so much as to make it the very condition of entry into His Kingdom? For faith is merely the result of forcing oneself to believe, in spite of and in the face of, better evidence to the contrary. Thus, God seems

## WHY DOES GOD ALLOW IT?

to value something which is against all nature and common sense, namely the short-circuiting of one of our highest faculties, that is, the ability of weighing evidence and then acting on it. Faith believes what it *cannot see*, that is, it accepts evidence it cannot weigh." In other words, the question of this physicist was, why should God regard it as a basis for special favour if he believed in face of conflicting evidence?

To return to our first line of thought, the question is: If one and the same Being planned both the good and the bad, the beautiful and the ugly, then all serious thought about Him with the human thinking faculties we possess is impossible.

Before proceeding any further, let us ask ourselves what the Bible teaches about this state of affairs. The first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans teaches in a perfectly clear and uncompromising manner that the creation shows no contradictions at all and gives only one line of thought about God, namely that He is a glorious, almighty, Creator-God and that His Universe proclaims solely His glory; "Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath showed 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, even His eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse" (Romans 1:19, 20).

Thus, the Bible teaches that if a man, seeing the universe, does not at the same time see the eternal power of the glorious Godhead, seeing the seen, does not draw conclusions as to the unseen, that man is "without excuse". In fact, the Bible takes a step further in the same direction in teaching in the same chapter

## WHY DOES GOD ALLOW IT?

(Romans 1:21) that if a man, seeing God by means of His gloriously created universe, does not become *thankful* towards Him and glorify Him, overwhelmed by its wonder revealing the Creator's wisdom, then that man will become "vain" in his imagination and his foolish heart will become darkened (Romans 1:21). That is, if a man observes the universe and does not automatically overflow with thanks towards Him and become a worshipper ("glorify Him as God"), then that man will, in the course of time, become unable to exercise his higher faculties such as "imagination". Over and above this, his "heart" will become darkened, that is, his moral faculties will become dulled. Not to become a worshipper is regarded as an abuse of the organs of thought and abuse commonly leads to degeneration of the organ concerned.

To sum up, we can say that the Holy Scriptures do not show much sympathy for the man having intellectual difficulties such as we have discussed in believing in God. According to them, a look at the Universe should be sufficient for anyone of standard intellectual capacity to be convinced of the existence of a God and should, further, suffice to make him a fervent worshipper.

So the question remains as to why the Bible takes this standpoint, seeing that thoughtful people the world over have found that the observation of the universe has not made them worshippers, but, on the contrary, has introduced intellectual difficulties of many kinds and indeed turned many from God. The investigation of that which is seen (Romans 1:19) has, for them, not revealed the unseen, but has turned them from believing in the unseen at all, let alone worshipping some Being



## WHY DOES GOD ALLOW IT?

in the unseen. The reason for this being, once more, that the seen shows so many anachronisms and contradictions that, judged by it the seen, the unseen becomes either ridiculous or unnecessary, superfluous for further serious thought.

Thus, to be a Christian is, in many circles, synonymous with being intellectually third rate. It is assumed that the Christian is intellectually incapable of comprehending the contradictions and anachronisms inherent in his rather naïve and intellectually impossible faith.

## 2

### THE ORIGIN OF EVIL

But are the above difficulties a true statement of facts? Are there really irreconcilable intellectual difficulties involved in belief in the Christian God? Perhaps the relation of a personal experience will clarify some of the issues involved better than further theorising.

Before the Second World War, I often visited the cathedral at Cologne on the Rhine in Western Germany. I particularly admired, sometimes for hours on end, this beautiful Gothic edifice, the graceful flying buttresses, the superb high-domed roof, the mediæval, stained-glass windows and the organ. The more I admired the structure, the more I found myself admiring the architects and the masons who, during centuries, planned and built this beautiful cathedral. For all these graceful lines had obviously been carefully planned by experts, who, in addition to knowing the mathematics of such a structure, also had a keen appreciation of

beauty. Further, the quality of the craftsmanship was really first class in itself—in addition to the beauty of the general design. Thus I found myself admiring our forefathers as I studied their handiwork. Considering they had no modern mechanical devices to help them, they certainly did work wonders in their day.

Thus, the structure of that cathedral showed without doubt something of the mind behind it. To imagine that such a well-conceived edifice just simply arose without the careful planning of expert minds would be to invite the just derision of anyone in his right mind.

During the Second World War, Cologne was the object of perhaps more intensive aerial bombardment than any other city in Western Europe, and as the cathedral stands directly in the railway station yard, which was regularly and heavily bombed, it was often hit, and was badly damaged many times.

In the autumn of 1946, when I returned to Cologne for the first time after the war, I well remember the disappointment with which I saw the cathedral again. The two famous towers still stood and could be made out amidst the most dreadful wreckage and carnage imaginable. Practically everything else but the cathedral itself was razed or in ruins. From the distance the towers still looked fine, but as one approached, huge holes appeared in the massive masonry. Hundreds of tons of concrete and bricks had been built into one single hole high up in one tower to partially replace the masonry which had been blasted away by a glancing bomb. The roof was in tatters, the organ gone, the windows out, all around lay knee-deep an indescribable mass of wreckage, torn wood, pulverised

## WHY DOES GOD ALLOW IT?

masonry and huge blocks of stone partially concealing bomb craters.

This chaotic picture made a deep impression on me as I thought of the former order and beauty of the same spot. But, as these thoughts passed through my mind, one idea never entered it—I never connected in any way, of course, the chaos of this once-so-beautiful edifice with inefficiency or purpose on the part of the architects or masons who constructed it. Neither did I begin to doubt the existence of the men who constructed it because of the many contradictions now before my eyes in their handiwork. One would probably have to have thought quite hard for a very long time to have turned up such an exotic idea. In fact, even among the general ruin the *remains* of the former glory of the place showed how *well* the architects had planned everything. The mighty flying buttresses still stood, the graceful Gothic arches were still there, even the bomb-holes in the masonry showed how well the architects had planned and how expertly the masons had built even in those parts hidden from human view for centuries. Right to the core *precisely the general ruin* showed in fact the opposite to any such exotic thought—how well the whole edifice had been conceived and constructed. One could go even further, and state that the ruined structure showed in some ways even better than the intact edifice, the perfection of the design and construction. Here was no stucco work, fine on the outside, but inside, where no one could normally see, all rubbish, like many a modern building.

Obviously no one was going to accuse the architects of producing and designing a ruin. Quite obviously the cathedral was never planned as such—such a thought

## WHY DOES GOD ALLOW IT?

would never even fit in with its being a ruin now. It was so easy in general to distinguish between what was ruin and what was planned. Although the cathedral showed at the same time both perfection and ruin and was a mixed picture, this fact never allowed either of the following thoughts :

1. that, because the cathedral was a ruin, a mixture of chaos and order, there could therefore be *no mind*, no architect, behind it;

2. that, because the edifice was a mixture of ruin and order, one could therefore no longer hope to recognise any *characteristics* of a mind behind it.

This ruined cathedral has often reminded me of the state of the Creation itself as we see it today, verily a mixed picture, a hodge-podge of order and chaos, beauty and ugliness, love and hate all hopelessly mixed up one with the other. But be it remembered at this point how illogical it were to conclude therefore automatically that :

1. *Therefore* the edifice of Creation has *no mind*, no architect, behind it. And yet, this is precisely the position of our atheist, such as has been outlined above. We remember that the atheist says he sees nothing but contradictions in nature, and therefore leaves out the postulate of God as merely confusing.

2. *Therefore* any *characteristics* of a mind behind nature cannot be distinguished. It is generally fairly easy to distinguish between plan and supervening chaos, even in nature. Chaos, indeed, can often lay bare the characteristics of the mind behind things even better than the complete plan of the undamaged edifice. The study of cancer cells, for example ("ruined" cells of the

## WHY DOES GOD ALLOW IT?

edifice known as the body), has lain bare many unsuspected secrets of the order and design of the healthy body-cell, which might not have been so easily uncovered otherwise. Thus, even though creation is a mixed picture, it is untenable to conclude that therefore no Creator exists and no characteristics of His mind can be seen in it. Often the "ruined edifice" shows them up better than the "undamaged building". The "damage" in creation often brings out the characteristics of the mind behind it better than the original state.

And yet, it is the position of atheists and agnostics that nothing certain can be known from the observation of the universe about the Creator's mind, supposedly largely because of the mixed picture of good and bad, chaos and order which the universe presents. But the illogical nature of this position must surely be obvious, and Romans 1 teaches the untenable nature of this position too. In fact the Bible in general teaches on the same lines that illness, death, hate and ugliness are all outward manifestations of a state of "ruin" and are fairly easily distinguishable from health, life, love and beauty, all of which represent the original undamaged state.

Thus the teaching of Romans 1 that the Universe, even the fallen or "damaged" Universe, reveals sufficient of God to bring any honest thinking person to thankfulness and worship, is surely not illogical, but is, in fact, a true representation of the facts available.

## WHY DOES GOD ALLOW IT?

### 3

#### WHY DOES GOD NOT FORBID EVIL?

Of course, all illustrations and parables of the above type are imperfect, and our cathedral is no exception. One imperfection in our illustration lies, of course, in the fact that the architects of the cathedral are long since dead, and therefore could not prevent the bombing of their masterpiece. God is, supposedly, not dead, so that the question now resolves itself into the reason why an almighty God, who presumably loves His masterpiece, the Creation, did not prevent the "bombing" of His masterpiece. Here, of course, our parable of the cathedral can help us no more.

Questions of this sort ("Why does God not stop it?") I find usually arise where the questioner has not taken the trouble to consider exactly what the nature of love—or, for that matter, of any virtue in general—is. If one considers just what love or any other virtue is, the problem usually resolves itself quite quickly and intellectually satisfactorily. So let us ask ourselves this question at once as a preliminary to returning to the general problem: *What is the Nature of Love in Particular and of Virtue in General?*

Of course, we cannot speak here of God's love directly, because He is infinite, and anything and everything infinite is beyond our thinking apparatus. It is not intended here, therefore, to go into the nature of love or virtue in general either from God's or man's point of view exhaustively, but merely to look at the question in so far as it concerns our subject matter.

## WHY DOES GOD ALLOW IT?

According to the Bible, it is clear that God wishes us to understand as much as we can comprehend of His love, even though He and His love are infinite and we are finite. So He has supplied us information about His love in a form we can comprehend. He has done this in the shape of using human love, particularly that between a bridegroom and his bride, as His example. The love of God's Son, Jesus Christ, to us men is continually compared to the kind of love a man has for his bride. Christ calls Himself repeatedly the Bridegroom and the Church His bride.

How did love of this kind between bridegroom and bride originate? The young man saw one fine day the young lady and began to notice an attraction to her, which is better experienced than described. If the young lady is really a lady, this relationship will not have started with her, but with the young man (that is, if he is a *man*). She may, at first, not notice his attraction to her, until he starts to woo her by, maybe, sending her flowers or by some other discreet method. But, until the wooing starts, the love is usually one-sided—from him towards her—and a one-sided love affair can be very painful indeed, for love is made to be mutual, if it is to be happy and satisfying.

There is one burning question which the young man would like answered at this stage above all other questions:

is my attraction towards her reciprocated by her towards me? And wooing serves to answer this question. For one day the young lady notices his attentions and attraction towards her and has to take a decision: do I and can I return the affection? If she is wise, she will consider this question very carefully at this stage,

## WHY DOES GOD ALLOW IT?

and maybe consult her parents or her friends or someone else who is more experienced than she in these matters. If she and her advisers think she *may* return the affection, then she must decide if she *can* love him. And if that question is answered in the affirmative, there follows a first meeting to arrive at an understanding, and great is the joy of two hearts that have entrusted themselves in mutual love and faithfulness to one another.

But, in order to win love and to be able to return love, several matters must be considered :

1. The young man must woo (excuse the old-fashioned expression, but it is the one which fills the bill best of all for our purposes) the young lady. The moment *force* takes the place of *wooing*, both joy and love cease and are often replaced by hate and misery. The whole structure of love is built up on free mutual consent, absolute respect for the sovereignty of the partner. In other words, the structure on which love is built is *freedom to love*, mutual consent or absolute free will on the part of both partners to give one another their entire mutual affection. Without this freedom, true love is impossible.

When Eliezer, Abraham's servant, asked Rebekah to become Isaac's wife (Genesis 24), he wanted to simply take her with him, after he had the agreement of the relatives. But the relatives saw immediately that this was no basis for love and marriage, and demanded that the young lady herself be publicly questioned as to whether she wanted Isaac or no. So they called her and asked her before the family what her will was in this matter. Only after she had given her public consent, based on her own free-will decision, did the relatives



## WHY DOES GOD ALLOW IT?

agree to the marriage. They knew that no other basis was sound enough for love and marriage.

The same basis obtains for love and marriage in all civilised countries. The couple are both required to give public, free-will consent in the "I will" of marriage ceremonies.

2. The shocking consequences of neglecting this simple fact are seen in the love affair of Amnon and Tamar (2 Samuel 13). Amnon fell madly in love with the King's beautiful daughter Tamar and just could not wait to woo and win her love and consent. By guile he made arrangements to be with her alone by feigning illness and then forced her, so madly was he "in love" with her. "Love" that cannot woo and wait is often merely another name for "lust". The consequence of all this was that his burning "love" for her was changed in a twinkling into just as burning a hate (2 Samuel 13:15)—as indeed is usually the case in such circumstances. Tamar's heart was of course utterly broken and "she remained desolate in her brother Absalom's house" (2 Samuel 13:20). The young lady usually suffers much more in broken love affairs than the young man, which brings out how necessary it is to teach boys to regard girls as inviolable, and not as playthings.

So we may conclude that, in order to *love* (and by this we do not mean merely physical union, which can result from lust, but union of the whole trinity of which we consist, body, soul and spirit. Mere physical union, without the mutual love of the whole being of both partners, body, soul and spirit, is a violation of a fundamental law of nature and results in a searing of the character, the more it is practised. A large number of mental illnesses today can be traced to offences

## WHY DOES GOD ALLOW IT?

against natural laws of this kind) one must have *absolute freedom to love*. If freedom is replaced by force by either of the partners, then the possibility of really loving is rapidly removed, and hate may ensue. In other words, to be able to really love there must be *genuine freedom to love*, implying, of course, the contrary also, i.e. *the genuine freedom not to love*.

3. This may be summed up perhaps in our third point; *to have the possibility of real love there must be absolute and genuine freedom either to love or not to love*. A real genuine open choice to love or not to love is the absolute prerequisite for any real love at all.

4. The Bible teaches that *God Himself is love*. Being love, He seeks therefore *answering love*, pure, warm, genuine love from us, because love is satisfied only if it is mutual, if it is returned. He, as the Bridegroom, woos us and hopes to win the answering love of the bride, His people on earth. Being love, He cannot *demand* or *force* such love; the very attempt to do so by force would destroy the very basis of all love. As our true Lover, He does everything to show us the genuine nature of His love. In doing this, He even went so far as to become Man on earth in the form of Jesus Christ, there to die of His own free will to free us from the guilt and bondage of sin. Greater love hath no man than that he lay down his life for his friend. Christ Jesus did even more than that in wooing mankind: He lay down His life for His enemies, and so showed to us all the very greatest love that a man can show. All this is a part of the expression of the wooing of the bride by the bridegroom.

5. Now consider one vital point in the form of a

question. What would happen if God had so constructed man that he could not take a true moral decision himself, but was only capable of automatically doing God's will, just as a lock opens when one turns the right key in it? Or just as an automatic vending machine delivers a bar of chocolate when one puts the right coin in it. If man were so constructed to deliver "love" when God touched the right button, would love in fact be delivered? Can any such system, whereby one is constructed to deliver a "virtue" of any sort, in fact produce any virtue at all? Let us assume that God, *in order to be sure of our love*, took from us the possibility of exercising our free will at all to love or not to love and made us, in fact, like the automatic machine—He presses the button and we deliver our "love" as a matter of course. Could such a set-up be said in any way to involve real love? *To have our love at all, He must give us true free will to love or not to love, just as we please*; such necessity lies in the structure of love and indeed of any other virtue too.

*Thus, for God to plan for true love at all involves the built-in risk of the proposed partner not loving at all.* God wished—and *still wishes*—to set up a Kingdom of love on earth and in heaven. But to do so, the above outlined risk had to be run; it is inherent in the very nature of good, virtue and love—the risk of His wooing not being responded to, the risk of the proposed partner not loving. For this reason it is usually those people who have not considered much about the nature of love and virtue who are always so keen on having God play the role of the dictator and use brute force even at the present stage of things in this world.

The same risk is involved in planning every and any

## WHY DOES GOD ALLOW IT?

virtue. Take, for example, the virtue of alms-giving. If a poor person asks me for some money to get a meal and I give him something, I exercise a virtue—namely, that of alms-giving. If I, however, say that beggars should be looked after from the rates and taxes and the town authorities send me the bill for the taxes to support the poor and needy, which I must then pay as my duty, I exercise no virtue, even though the poor man may receive exactly the same sum of money from the town authorities indirectly out of my pocket as I would have given him directly. In the one case, I give him of my own free will a sum of money which involves virtue. In the second case I pay my taxes because it is my duty to do so. But this involves no exercise of virtue; it is the least I can do. Forced charity is no charity at all, but a tax. If I force a child to be “good” when we are out visiting, he may be outwardly good (for which I am very thankful), but the “goodness” may not be even skin deep. Force can make no one good, no one to exercise a virtue. (This is to say nothing at all against the use of force as a punishment for wrong-doing, where force is necessary and may be a corrective. But it, in itself, does not make good.)

This discloses one of the weaknesses of the socialised world, in which all “charity” or what would otherwise be “works of love” are organised by the State. Such cease to be “charity” and “works of love”, the exercise of true virtue, immediately the element of real freedom is taken from them. One other serious point should be mentioned here too. The free-will giver of money or goods (“alms” to use the old fashioned word once more) gets a blessing from his giving. Jesus Himself

said that it was more *blessed* to give than to receive. The exercise of any virtue ennobles and enriches the character and gives real joy and genuine satisfaction to him who exercises it. Whereas the tax-payer pays his taxes because he must—and in many cases begrudges doing so, which state of mind, of course, gives neither joy nor ennoblement of character.

The orphan homes of a George Müller were supported and run entirely by free-will offerings and by free-will staff and were real havens of love, joy and rest to thousands of orphans. But how often is the State institute which has largely replaced these private institutions, being a matter of rates and taxes and profession, a place as cold with respect to love as the stones and concrete of which it is constructed? The Welfare State, in taking over everything to remove maybe a few abuses, too often kills love and related virtues which were at one time the driving-force in the foundation of such institutions. In so far as free-will giving of money and services is removed, love is liable to die out in such places. A more serious fact is, of course, the removal of the ennobling effects on character which the removal of the exercise of virtue and sacrifice brings. This effect on the character is surely one of the most serious difficulties faced by the modern highly socialised and organised world, and prepares the way for dictators to rule over "the mass of mankind" (one of Hitler's favourite expressions). Strength of character, such is required to withstand a tyrant, is not built without the ennoblement resulting from a life-long exercise of the virtues and without overcoming the various vicissitudes of life often complicated by having to suffer for conscience' sake. The

## WHY DOES GOD ALLOW IT?

tendency is for the modern socialised world to take away both these character-forming elements of life, often out of a false idea of humanitarianism ("providing every need for everybody from the cradle to the grave"). The result is that progressively fewer have the stamina of character to be ready and willing to suffer for their convictions.

When God made the heavenly world and the angels, He wished to construct the very best, and founded therefore a kingdom of love and virtue. But to do this He had to build in genuine freedom ("His service is perfect freedom") for the inhabitants, which He proceeded to do. The angels and their chief, Lucifer, were given natures capable of genuine love to their Creator and towards their fellows. This means that they had the possibility of exercising genuine love, of wooing and being wooed, with, of course, the corresponding opposite possibility too—the possibility of rejection of both. The Bible reports, quite as a matter of fact, that a large proportion of the angels followed their chief, Lucifer, and did, in fact, show that they really could love, in that they chose not to love and to turn their back on their Creator's wooing. Turning their backs on Him, who is the sole and only Good, they became, of course, bad, cursed and loveless.

So that the very existence of evil in a world created by an almighty God really only goes to show that the good and the virtue in it really are genuine and the love in it really is love, and not in reality anything else—as is sometimes taught ("love is a covert form of egoism," etc). The very presence of evil in an almighty God's world is really good evidence that God really is genuine love.

## WHY DOES GOD ALLOW IT?

The chief angel, Lucifer, having himself chosen the evil, became missionary minded and sought company for himself in inducing others to follow the same path. So he approached Adam and Eve, who were also made with a character capable of love and exercised, therefore, free choice. As a result they, too, made a wrong choice; turning their backs on the only Good, they became bad and introduced sin and misery into the Creation.

But does not all this go to show the high esteem in which God holds men? He really takes our decisions, us ourselves and our love seriously, seriously enough to woo them to Himself, this again only showing His nature of love. For true love always *esteems* and *respects* in wooing its partner. This explains, too, why God woos men by means of "the foolishness of preaching", and not by sending mighty angels or appearances of spirits from other worlds. They would only frighten people if they were to appear in supernal power and splendour. But God's purpose is to win our trust and our love, so that He uses the most natural methods available to allow real freedom of choice on the part of the sought partner, and not to browbeat with shows of power—that were to use the dictator's and not the lover's method. Therefore, *in general*, He does not use methods which would terrorise people into "accepting" His love, because one cannot terrorise into the kind of love He seeks. Compare even Jesus' miracles with the above-stated methods.

To sum up, we can say that the Universe was allowed to be "bombed", to use our previous metaphor, because such is a built-in possibility and risk in designing a world capable of genuine love and virtue, in designing

## WHY DOES GOD ALLOW IT?

a Kingdom of Love, a Kingdom of Perfect Freedom. Without this possibility one just cannot have *the best* at all.

### 4

#### “WHAT NEXT?”

But what would we expect God to do once the Creation had taken the wrong turn and turned its back on the only Good? Once the ruination had occurred, what next?

The Scripture says that even before the wrong choice had been taken, either by man or the angels, God, in His omniscience, knew, of course, all about it and had even made careful plans to cope with the situation arising. This fact—God’s obvious omniscience with respect to the Fall, long before it occurred has been a stumbling-block to many. Actually few real intellectual difficulties are involved, if the matter is considered carefully, and for the following reasons:

If I observe a person very carefully during a period of time, I may notice some little idiosyncrasy he may have. He may say “Ah!”, for example, every time he comes to pronounce a difficult word. Or he may twitch his eyebrows before he tells a good joke. In the course of time I can predict what he is going to do, before he actually does it, on the basis of my previous observations.

But this ability of mine to *foretell* his actions makes me in no way *responsible* for them. In the same way, the fact that God was able to foresee what Adam and Eve and mankind in general will do, does not necessarily implicate Him in making Him responsible—par-



## WHY DOES GOD ALLOW IT?

ticularly so if He has explicitly given them a freewill choice. So God foresaw the "Fall" of both angels and man, and even made preparations to send His Son as a sacrifice for sin before the foundation of this world. Yet many imagine that this foreknowledge must, of necessity, *implicate* God in the *guilt* of the Fall. Foreknowledge, however, as we have seen, in no way makes Him responsible for the Fall, and yet many imagine that, if God foreknew, He must of necessity be responsible in some way for it. Quite the contrary, the genuine possibility of free choice, which He has conferred upon us so as to make us capable of loving and exercising real virtue, decides the creatures' guilt and the Creator's righteousness.

Many will maintain at this point that if God saw in advance the chaos which would follow the possibility of free choice, saw all the hate, the misery and sorrow which would follow, why ever did He proceed to make the angels, man and the universe? Was He not rather sadistic to have done so, knowing in advance the consequences? Would it not have been better to have left it all undone, if it was going to involve all this? In principle, the same type of question arises in our own lives. For example, in marriage. At the very ceremony we know that we shall experience the sorrows of separation by death—in fact, we say "till death us do part" (unless the second coming of Christ occurs before we die). And yet we go in for all this sorrow and heart-break, knowing that it is bound to come, because we believe that the joy of love and the ennoblement of giving ourselves away to serve another, whom we love, even for a day (and forty to fifty years pass away like a day), is better than no love at all.

## WHY DOES GOD ALLOW IT?

The enrichment of character and ennoblement of the soul brought about by love as God intended it more than compensate the certain future and present trial. It is a question of balance, and those who know love will always say it is of exceedingly more value than the sorrow and trial it involves. Evidently, the Creator, being love personified, thinks the same way, for He *did* indeed create us in spite of everything and go in for the huge trial, being of the conviction that the warmth of love more than compensates the bitterness of suffering. Love for a day is worth infinitely more than no love at all, and where there is life, there is the possibility of love. Over and above that, the trials and suffering here are for a short time, whereas the potential ennobling of character of those perfected by suffering lasts eternally. So that, whichever way we look at the question of the Creation Experiment, we must decide that, from the standpoint of love at least, it is worth it.

But now the Fall has taken place, and sin is in the world, what next? What would we expect a God to do whose nature is love? Let us ask the question in another way. What would we expect of a true lover who had been misunderstood and rejected? The Scripture says, "Love suffereth long and is kind . . . is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil . . . beareth all things . . . endureth all things. Love never faileth" (1 Corinthians 13:4-8).

That is what one would expect of true love—long suffering, kindness, not easily being provoked, enduring all things in the hope of ultimate success in the wooing process of love. God saw the wrong choice resulting in chaos and ruin long before it came, and when it came He did not "rear up" and destroy on the spot,

## WHY DOES GOD ALLOW IT?

as many imagine He should do and as they do when anything exasperating or unrighteous happens to them. Rather He sought to salvage by the patience of love what could be salvaged out of the awful mess. He had warned in faithfulness and sternness of the consequences of the wrong choice in man and angels, but He did not, of course, block His own way back to our heart's love by attempting to force us back—that were to have cut out the possibility of genuine love for ever. He continually exercised long suffering and patience in trying to win us back to love and reason, this process culminating in the sending of His own Son to lay down His life freely for us all. For the Son went of His own free will and decision to death, He did not even try to defend Himself properly, but came, as He said, to die for the sins of many.

In the meantime He waits and woos in the hope that all men will come to a knowledge of the truth: "Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:4). "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness; but is long suffering to us ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9). This means just what it says, and does not necessarily imply that all men will, in fact, repent. God is ready and willing to receive *all* who do turn from their own ways to His ways.

The fact, then, that He has waited so long after the ruination of His handiwork before judging evil-doers in every generation is in reality yet another indication of God's true character—as God of love, loving-kindness, patience and long suffering, not easily provoked. In fact, it is the only explanation I can see of the fact

## WHY DOES GOD ALLOW IT?

that an almighty, omniscient and righteous God has not long since exercised withering, general judgment on all sinners—that is, on all men (for we all belong to that category, if we are honest with ourselves and our fellow men), and set up a “puppet state” on earth and in heaven that slavishly does His will immediately, just as any true tyrant or dictator would do if his will were thwarted to the extent that God’s will has been and is thwarted on earth by mankind. (For anyone who doubts whether God’s will can be *thwarted*, either in our own life or in the life of others, there is one way to make the matter clear: ask yourself whether God planned a certain act of sadism known to and maybe experienced by yourself. Was it God’s will to gas miserably six or seven million Jews, among them old men and women and children, in cold blood? To say that it was anything but a thwarting of God’s will is to lessen the heinous sin of it all. The same can be applied to the use of atomic weapons, say, on open towns, with all the horrible consequences.) But it would thwart God’s will maybe even more than what does happen, and is happening now, if God were to set up a “puppet kingdom”, by force doing His will, thereby cutting out and making impossible even the little measure of love still possible to us now by His exercising patience still. Even the little love and the few turning to Him to be refreshed and made new by His love is worth infinitely more than no such love at all and no such possibility.

If the Lord had judged straight away, how many who have since turned in repentance to Him would have been otherwise lost to him and His kingdom of love?

The following story is told about the late King George

VI and Queen Elizabeth. I cannot vouch for the truth of it, but pass it on as it illustrates the point I wish to make.

As a young man the future King of England fell in love with the pretty young Scottish lady Elizabeth, and after a time approached her to ask for her hand. She refused. It is said that the Prince was not exactly a lady's man and was, maybe, a little awkward in speech and manners.

The young Prince was heart-broken over this setback and went to his mother, Queen Mary, for advice. Queen Mary listened to his tale of woe sympathetically, and when he had finished his story she said she wanted to ask him just one question—did he really love Elizabeth, or would anyone else do? After a moment's consideration the young Prince replied that he would marry Elizabeth or no one else at all in the whole world. "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 and gathered up what courage was left him and asked the charming young Scottish lady again. The story runs that he was again refused. After recovering somewhat from the shock, he again approached his mother for advice, who again listened patiently. She showed him every sympathy, and again inquired if he thought he really loved her after this second rebuff. Her son was quite clear that she alone of all the eligible young ladies was the only one he wanted and loved. "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 preparation, the young Prince approached the pretty young Scottish

## WHY DOES GOD ALLOW IT?

lady for the third time. She noted, of course, how serious the young Prince was, how constant his love had been and how she was his one and all. And one thing more she noted. She began to notice that his love towards her was beginning to kindle an answering fire in her own heart, and the warmth of it was beginning to return some of the love with which he loved her. So she felt able to say that she did love him and would become his wife. Thus, the story goes, began a very happy family life lasting until the death of the King.

Love begets love, but it often has to be very patient, long suffering and kind till the fire is kindled in the prospective partner's heart. And, once kindled, it must be regularly tended to maintain the warmth of the blaze God intends it to be, warming and refreshing both partners, so that they can rejoice in the happiness true love brings.

Of course, there comes a time in every love affair when a *final* answer towards the wooer must be made, be it "yes" or "no". One day the wooed one may make a rejection which turns out to have been final and permanent. And not only the wooed one has a free-will final decision to take towards the wooer. The wooer, too, can in the same way from his end decide how long to woo and be rejected. Even this final decision to woo no longer will be made on the basis of love and will be postponed as long as at all possible. But if, say, the wooed marries another, all question of further wooing is settled at once. The Scripture teaches that such may happen in the spiritual sense, too, when the Spirit of God strives no more with man's spirit. We men can seldom see when God's spirit gives up a man and entreats him no more. But that such does occur is

## WHY DOES GOD ALLOW IT?

clear, even though invisible to mortal eye. God woos as a perfect lover, Jesus is the Lover of our souls, as Wesley's beautiful hymn expresses it, but there comes a time when we can irrevocably "marry another", and so cut ourselves off finally from the striving of God's Spirit. We may give ourselves over to the love of material things, the love of things social, the love of sinful things and not allow anyone to reason with us about it, so turning our backs on Him finally; then wooing days are over. The Hebrews letter speaks in several places of the ceasing of such days, as for example in Hebrews 3:11, 6:6-8, 10:26-30. The finality of such days is sombre indeed to consider, and intended to be a serious warning to us if we have any tendency to take lightly the dealing of God with us.

### 5

#### CONCLUSION

Thus, from a short consideration of the nature of the chaos and tragedy and from a consideration of the nature of God Himself as revealed by Scripture (in which absolutely no attempt is made to aspire to theology, but rather to express the thoughts of a layman in these things in the language a layman may understand), it seems that it is not intellectually untenable to believe in a perfect, almighty God, whose nature is perfect love. In fact, if God is love, and if He has revealed Himself as the perfect Man in Christ (as Christ claimed of Himself unequivocally), we should positively expect the present state of affairs, until such time as God has salvaged out of the wreck all that will allow itself to be salvaged, all that will repent (that

## WHY DOES GOD ALLOW IT?

hated word!), and turn to Him for forgiveness of sins and the resulting peace which passes understanding.

When, however, the salvage work is as complete as possible and all that God can save of the old bombed wreck has been safely brought out (this is the meaning of the Apostle Peter's exhortation: "Save yourselves out of this untoward generation", Acts 2:40), then God has promised that He is going to renovate the whole "cathedral", the whole edifice of His creation, and make it far better even than it was in Adam's time and before. He is going to produce a new heaven and a new earth wherein righteousness dwells. One would hardly expect Him to leave His own creation a wreck for ever, would one? His promise is that He will not do so. For the government of this renewed creation God has said He is planning to use and employ those who have been renewed and refined by repentance and warmed and purified by the love of His Spirit, and so wooed out of the love of the present evil state of things. One can fairly easily see the wisdom of employing men of this type in the administration of the perfect kingdom. They are those who have tasted already the bitterness of making a wrong choice and turning their backs on the only Good. They are, therefore, not likely to make the same mistake again and re-introduce misery again. They say that the burned child is afraid of the fire; the saved sinner keeps well away from sin. Of such salvaged people God is going to populate His new Kingdom, and is wooing such during the present time—including now.

Over the new creation will be set the One who has proved Himself to be the fittest to take such high office. Could His fitness to rule be better proven than by the



## WHY DOES GOD ALLOW IT?

fact that He loves His subjects well enough to die for them? Most rulers require their subjects to show their loyalty to them by being ready to die to support their rule. With Christ it is just the reverse. He died of His own free will that His subjects might live. Surely such a kingdom under such a King will be well ruled and administered! Happy indeed will such subjects be: "He has revealed unto us the secret of His will according to His good pleasure which He has proposed to do in His own heart: namely, for the *administration of the fullness of times to head up everything in Christ; that on earth as well as that in heaven.*" (Ephesians 1:9-10 Elberfeld translation). The administration of the fullness of the times refers, of course, to the administration of the promised kingdom of God. Everything in this kingdom is to be headed up in Christ. Man's participation in this coming Kingdom begins here and now on being salvaged out of the present wreck by putting one's trust in Jesus Christ as Saviour from sin for ever. "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I, John, saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven, saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away" (Revelation 21:1-4).

## THE POWER OF THE RESURRECTION

THE message which the Apostles preached was predominantly the message of Christ risen (Acts 4:2, for example), risen for our justification and sitting at the right hand of the Majesty on High, making intercession for His own and waiting until all His enemies are made His footstool, waiting for the time when the whole creation will cry, "Christ reigneth". Though the Apostles had known Christ as a Man "after the flesh", yet now they knew Him no more as such, but only as the Risen One, waiting to come in glory. They were simply filled with this vision of Christ, and preached it in the power of the Spirit of God with such effect that unconverted men, entering the meeting-places of believers of those times, simply fell down on their knees and confessed that God was indeed among them (1 Corinthians 14:25)—so obvious and overpowering was the Presence of God with His people.

But all this may sound threadbare today. These events have been so much talked about from a theoretical and historical or even psychological standpoint by those who perhaps have had no first-hand experience of this power, that the whole subject has become either a trifle sickening, or may be simply uninteresting. Anyway, very few really reckon with such things as a reality nowadays. And indeed is it right to expect it? Does not God perhaps work by quieter, calmer methods

these days? I think, as a result of a good deal of experience and observation in various conditions of Christian life in the British Isles and on the Continent, that this power of the Resurrection should and can be present among believers just in the way described in the New Testament. The outward manifestations may indeed be quieter than those of which we have read in the New Testament and in the descriptions of revivals past and present. But both in quiet and exciting times the same power can and does work, of this I have been witness in German prisoner-of-war camps and among the German students. And one thing remains clear and certain to me: our God revealed in Jesus Christ does in fact remain the same yesterday, today and forever, and still works therefore by the same power today as in times gone by. There is, and can be, only one difference between those times and now: we have changed, not God or His methods. And this will be the reason why we, as present-day Christians, do not often experience what our early Christian forefathers possessed. We have become weak, not because God has ceased to show this Resurrection power, but because we do not, or do not know how to, avail ourselves in practical everyday life of this power.

The Apostle Paul struggles to find language adequate to express this Resurrection power working in believers: "The surpassing greatness of His power towards us who believe, according to the working of the might of His strength in which He wrought in Christ in raising Him from the dead" (Ephesians 1: 19-20) is an example of the type of manifestation of the power that God shows to believing Christians and for which Paul can scarcely find language adequate. He tells us

## WHY DOES GOD ALLOW IT?

that the self-same power which God used in order to raise His Son from the dead (and when one considers how Christ died, how dreadfully stricken He was in Body, Soul and Spirit and how utterly impossible it would have been to have brought Him back even to merely physical life again after such suffering except by a mighty miracle, then one recognises the surpassing greatness of this Resurrection power), works in us today who believe . . . *toward us who believe*. If, then, we do not experience the greatness of this power, may it not be due to a faulty type of belief in us? Have we here perhaps a clue to powerlessness and feebleness?

But how can we get a line on believing in this sort of way that God takes us into the area of Resurrection power? Let us ask ourselves another question which will clear the issue. The question is this: although the power of God was always available for Christ, what condition did He have to fulfil in order to come into possession of the *Resurrection Power*? The answer is, of course, clear at once. He had to die first, if God's Resurrection Power was to be manifested in Him. As long as He lived, *this* power could never be manifested. But in willing obedience to the Father's will, He did die—and therefore lives again at this moment in the power of an endless resurrection life. This power of God was able to be worked out in our Lord because He believed enough to act out God's known Will for Him and to die. May we perhaps thus write to bring our point home—"The surpassing power of God towards *Him who believed* . . . ?"

And so the law governing Resurrection Power towards us also is made clear. Paul expressed it thus: "I also count all things to be loss. . . . I have suffered the

loss of all and count them to be filth that I may win Christ . . . know Him and the power of His resurrection" (Philippians 3:8-10). The parallel here adopted by the Apostle is obvious. Jesus Christ died not only simply in the body. Before dying He said that He had come for no other purpose than to do the will of the Father—thus dying, as it were, to any personal will of His own, He might have had when required, for example, to drink the awful cup at Gethsemane and Golgotha. Thus, utterly and completely, He died bodily, and died to His Own will, in order to do in love the Father's will. Thus, and only thus, He came into the resurrecting power of the Father and into the glories of an everlasting life at His right Hand. The motive was pure love to the Father and to us.

Paul the Apostle says practically the same in a slightly different manner. In the passage just quoted from the letter to the Philippians we learn how utterly and completely he died to any other will and to any other purpose than the glorifying of Jesus Christ his Lord. He saw nothing else but the will of his Master. The result of this single eye on the part of the Apostle to the things of Christ was utter and complete empowerment with the same power from the Father with which He raised His Son.

He still empowers those with this Resurrection power today who *thus* believe, who believe in this New Testament way of believing. May we put it a little differently? To be "out and out" for Him only according to all that we can find daily in His revealed will in the Bible, will mean that He will be "out and out" for us in empowering us with this surpassing greatness of His power. This incidently gives us a clue why it is that

## WHY DOES GOD ALLOW IT?

it is impossible to have this power if we do not have His entire will as revealed in the Scriptures. If we do not know His will, because we are not sure whether He has in fact revealed it in the Scriptures, then we can never do His will with a single believing eye, which is the prerequisite for Resurrection power.

This sums up what little experience with regard to Resurrection power I have in the goodness of God been able to observe in the last few years of travelling about as an evangelist on the European Continent. If a Christian man or woman wholeheartedly sets out to find out and then to do the will of God, simply because he wishes with his whole heart to please Him, that man or woman will experience this power, even though mistakes may be made in the efforts to please and love Him who loved us unto death.

## BUT THAT DOES NOT ALTER MY ATTITUDE TO THE LORD JESUS CHRIST . . .

SOME time ago I was invited to take a New Year's Eve Bible-reading for Christians. There was a fine atmosphere of devotion to the Lord, and I took as my subject the factors which determine our relationship and love to the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. In the course of the Bible study we all waxed warm as we considered together how we could cultivate more and more His active Presence among us in the New Year. It was made clear that we must love the Person of Jesus Christ and that, since He is no longer bodily present on the earth, we must learn to love Him by means to some extent different from those by which the disciples, who had intercourse with Him daily on earth, were able to use. Love must know its object; one cannot *love* the completely unknown, so that to love the Lord we must have some sure knowledge of Him. Today, for us, the only source of sure knowledge of Jesus Christ is the Bible. But the Book is not only the source of *knowledge* of Him, in the Hands of the Holy Spirit, it is also the source of His Power towards us (1 Corinthians 1:18). So we thought about the Word of God as the source of all knowledge of the Person of Jesus Christ, and as the source of all His Power towards us and emphasised the necessity of loving, humble and persevering Bible study

## WHY DOES GOD ALLOW IT?

as the great means of cultivating love towards the Person of Christ.

After the talk was over, an old Christian stood up and said that in these times of rush, hustle and hurry we really could not study the Bible as we ought, but we should not be cast down about that. The chief matter was not that of Bible study, but that Jesus Christ is our Saviour and He will look after all the rest.

It is, of course, quite clear that the chief matter is that Jesus Christ is our Saviour, and that we have received His pardon for all our sin and sins, so that we have His peace and joy. But, let us be quite clear about it, this treasure we have received only because we at some time or another found time either to listen to the preaching of the Bible or to read it ourselves. Somehow or another, by direct or indirect means, the Power of the Word of the Cross reached us and made us new creatures by mediating Christ and His love to us. If that Word was necessary to make us children of God, it is just as necessary to make us holy in practice once we are children of God—that He might sanctify and cleanse it (the church) with the washing of water by the word (Ephesians 5:26).

To love the Lord, we must know something about Him. To love Him much, we must know a lot about Him in our daily experience. This is only possible by intercourse with Him in His Word with His Representative on earth, the Holy Spirit, as our Teacher—“the Spirit of truth . . . will guide you into all truth. . . . He shall glorify Me” (John 16:13, 14). As already pointed out, one cannot *love* the unknown. Love should increase with knowledge, provided the object and sub-



ject of the love are worthy. That is the experience of every man who, with his wife, seeks wholeheartedly after His holiness—the more they get to know one another, the deeper grow the love and true respect one towards the other. So true humble Bible study increases our true love to God and to the Lord Jesus Christ by revealing ever more and more sides of His perfect character to our love.

In Germany, where I have had the privilege of evangelising among the students for over two years, the attempt to separate the Lord from His Word has progressed a long way, with disastrous consequences. Most of the preachers and teachers there go so far as to say that we must “possess Jesus” as Saviour, but separate Him from His Own Word. Many seldom mention that one can only possess the real Jesus Christ by possessing His Own Word. One cannot take a man seriously if one does not take his uttered or written word seriously, nor can one really get to know or to love Jesus Christ on any other basis than that of His Word. In consequence of the separation of the Lord from His Word, many Christians possess a Jesus Christ who has no real existence outside their own imagination. Their faith is then as unstable as their imagination, of course.

A short time ago I had the joy of meeting a fine young Christian from behind the Iron Curtain. He had given over all his prospects as a teacher, because he would not submit to the political pressure which required him to become politically active in favour of the Communists. He plans to give his whole time now to the Lord. It was an experience for me to live for a few days in the atmosphere of his zeal for the Lord. But he

## WHY DOES GOD ALLOW IT?

had problems—problems about the inspiration of the Bible, problems about the doctrines of the Church he planned to serve in Christ's name. He felt that some of these doctrines were not biblical, and so he had slipped across the Eastern frontier to come and talk to us.

We talked and prayed, and at length the Holy Ghost gave us a clear vision of God's will in one of these problems at least, and then he returned to his post behind the Iron Curtain with much rejoicing and firm in his intention to do God's will as revealed in His Word in all the problems we had discussed. After some months he wrote to say that, after talking with several theologians, he did not intend for the present to act on what we had prayed about together. He still saw quite clearly that the conclusions we had reached some months ago were biblical, but it would not alter his attitude to Jesus Christ in the least, whether or not he acted on them. He still wanted to serve Him with all his heart, and that was the chief thing. The other matters were all of secondary importance.

Here again is the attempt, this time by a dear and devoted young Christian, to separate love and obedience to Christ from love and obedience to His Word. What is the Lord Jesus Christ's attitude to this state of heart? "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep His commandments. *For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments*" (1 John 5:2, 3). "Therefore, whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon rock: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house;

## THAT DOES NOT ALTER MY ATTITUDE

and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And everyone that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it" (Matthew 7:24-27).

To withstand the storms of life it is not enough to hear and understand the Word of Truth; action is necessary. Without action, darkening of the understanding and separation from the life in God can occur, as is pointed out in Ephesians 4:18. To separate oneself from the Word and its practice is in reality to separate oneself from Him and from His Power. To neglect His Word is to neglect Him. To love His Word from the whole heart is to love Him in the same manner. And to be mighty in the Word is to be mighty in Him. This is the message that moved the psalmist when he wrote: "The law of thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver" (Psalm 119:72).

We reveal, then, our true attitude to Christ when we, in love to Him, search out His Will exposed to us for our good in His Word, with the one unswerving intention—that of putting it into practice from our whole hearts simply because this will please Him who loves us.

## GROWING IN THE KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST

**D**URING the tours of Western Germany, which we plan with the special object of reaching German students and people of professional standing, one meets all sorts of conditions and circumstances among the educated and outwardly well-brought-up classes. In one large town a young Christian woman student was introduced to me after a meeting by her Christian parents. She wore a wedding ring, but as no husband was introduced, and as several million young Germans fell during the war, I asked no questions, thinking, of course, she might be a war widow. However, in the course of time a different explanation was manifest. This woman student had become acquainted with a young man after the war and, without consulting parents or friends, the two had become friendly. He made no profession of Christ and was, on the contrary, an enemy of all "religion". In the early days of their friendship he did apparently display some interest, so that she thought that, as so many women in her position do, if they married and she had him all to herself, she would be in a better position to secure his conversion to Jesus Christ. However, as time went on his true character became more and more manifest, albeit to all but the girl, who, the more she compromised herself and committed herself to him, the less could see realities. Shortly before their marriage he repeatedly assured

his future wife that the marriage would for him bring no restrictions on his freedom to make other friendships with other women, and on their wedding morning he told her that she need expect no further "sacrifice" from him whatsoever; the most he would ever do was what he was doing this morning—going through a marriage ceremony with her to save her name and that of her family.

The marriage lasted outwardly less than a year, and inwardly, of course, never knew any of the real harmony and love that characterise real Christian marriage. Now she was divorced, with a small child to bring up. There is, of course, nothing new in a case such as this. It represents the unhappy lot of perhaps tens of thousands, and Christian circles are not always excluded from the divorce courts. But why cite such a case? Do we not hear so much of this kind of thing that it were better not to mention the subject? I have risked bringing it up here because I personally learned something from this case which helped me very much. Without trying to go into the sordid psychology of divorce, it might help to pass it on. It is not that a Christian may marry a Christian only (marry in the Lord) if he or she wants to do the will of the Lord (1 Corinthians 7:39)—that goes without saying. It is this. The young man had other women friends, at first secretly and later openly, during his time of courtship with this Christian student. He pretended at the start to belong to her only, but it was only pretence. For this reason, true heart-fellowship was never reached. He did not love the same Lord, and was not true to her. His heart was not reached, not because the girl did not love him, but because his own heart was divided towards

## WHY DOES GOD ALLOW IT?

her, and therefore deceitful, which condition prevented real heart-knowledge from ever being reached. They could have been together twenty-four hours of the day during their courtship and talked with one another and tried to learn one another's ways. But the chances are that this process would only have increased the cleft between them. Knowledge of one another could never have overcome the deficiency occasioned by a divided heart. So their fellowship was doomed from the start.

The principles governing the relationship between the believer and Christ are in some respects comparable. The Christian Church is compared to a bride, of whom Christ is the Bridegroom. The Bible teaches that the lack of fellowship with Christ caused by a divided heart towards Him can never be overcome by any amount of knowledge—even knowledge of His Word. A person who wishes to serve Christ and sets out to gain all kinds of theological or theoretical knowledge about Him, without being personally undividedly devoted to Him, is doing just the same, in a sense, as this young man did, and the consequences will only become more apparent with time, just as in his case. In the end the private audiences with the One towards whom he has a divided heart will become as distasteful to Him as the later meetings between this young man and his wife.

The Scripture teaches, then, that, parallel to the human case we have mentioned, the first absolute prerequisite for growing in grace and knowledge of the Lord is that of a heart undivided towards Him. On this foundation all grace and knowledge of Him are founded, and without it no true grace or knowledge of Him is available. This explains the meaning of some

## GROWING IN THE KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS

passages in the Scriptures which otherwise are perhaps not so easy to understand. The Epistle to the Hebrews, for example (Hebrews 6 : 1-3), teaches that full growth in grace is not attained by the Christian's own efforts towards holiness, but is a matter decided upon by the Lord. "This we will do (reach full growth) if the Lord permit." It sounds like predestination, but can easily be understood with our human example in mind. Of course, we do not expose our secret purposes and longings to every passer-by, or to anyone with whom we have no real fellowship, or to those who criticise all they can find about us. We shut up our hearts towards such, and they never really get to know us. So it is with our relationship to the Lord. If He sees a divided heart in us—and He sees the heart—then He cannot reveal Himself to us and we cannot get to know Him; we cannot grow in knowledge of Him, though He certainly wishes it. The principle governing true love do not permit of exposure of this type, it would be like casting pearls before swine. He will, however, reveal Himself and His love as much as He can in the circumstances and as far as our condition of heart allows it. He had much to tell His disciples on earth, but they were unfortunately not in a position of heart to allow of His more fully revealing Himself and the plans of His heart to them (John 16 : 12).

The principle goes even further. Ephesians 4 : 18 teaches that it is not dullness or sharpness of intellect that brings estrangement from the life in God and ignorance of Him; mere hardening of the heart against Him is sufficient to bring ignorance and darkness of understanding with respect to Him. So that on this basis it is not difficult to find the key to the gigantic growth in

## WHY DOES GOD ALLOW IT?

grace of the prophet Daniel. Secretly, while still very young, he gave his heart undividedly to God in that resolve to keep, respect and therefore love God's commandments for His race with regard to food (a trivial matter?) more than he feared Nebuchadnezzar's sword and servants.

The key to our relationship to the personal God lies just here too. I know of a godly minister in Germany who, as quite a boy, after having given his heart to the Lord, made up his mind to study theology and serve his Saviour in the ministry. He went unscathed through all the liberal theology of the Germany of that period and studied under most of the great uprooters of the faith of the Bible. Only the other day I discovered from his wife the source of his power. As quite a lad, secretly in his own heart, he made up his mind to reject all that did not agree with the whole Bible, no matter who it was who spoke to the contrary. Because his Saviour loved all that was revealed therein, it would, he argued, certainly please Him if he also loved and respected the same. This secret resolve in his heart while still young in the faith has been the source and well-spring of a life blessed and owned of God. The connection between knowledge of the Lord and our attitude to His Word is brought out in a revealing passage in the first book of Samuel (1 Samuel 3:7): "Samuel did not as yet know the Lord, neither was the word of the Lord yet revealed unto him."

Our Lord Jesus Christ loved us with an undivided heart even to death. Surely this, His love, enables us to respond to Him with undivided love too. Therein lies the key to all growth in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord.



## DIALECTICAL CHRISTIANITY

HERE in Europe one thinks and speaks perhaps more about Dialectical Materialism than in the United States. Communism, with its Dialectical Materialism, is in the air and on our doorstep, and one speaks often of the possibility of its overflowing westward, so that almost automatically the Western European acquaints himself with the modes of thought of the East so near to him. This does not mean to say, of course, that he always accepts that with which he is acquainted, but the mind becomes exercised by the mental gymnastics involved.

The principles behind Dialectical Materialism, the study of the materialistic explanation of the laws of action and reaction in nature, sociology, etc., can even be put to uses quite other than those envisaged by Karl Marx, Lenin, Engels and the other militant atheists. The underlying *materialism* is, of course, absolutely untenable from a Christian point of view, and, in the opinion of many scientists, from a scientific point of view too. But apart from this, the theory proposed, involving action and reaction for a period of time, gradually changing conditions in society or in a system up to a certain point, at which something entirely new takes place, which the originators of this line of thought called the revolutionary situation, is certainly capable of use by us. We do not mean, in any sense of the word, a political use, but by way of illustrating

## WHY DOES GOD ALLOW IT?

certain principles taught particularly by the Apostle Paul and often quite neglected in present-day presentation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Enormous efforts are being made today, and rightly so, to reach "the masses" with the "simple" Gospel. But it seems to be widely recognised that perhaps less effort is being spent and less success is obtained in making saints out of the new converts thus gained. Many who accept Christ as Saviour in a mass campaign on radio or television do, in fact, fall away after a comparatively short period of time, or just do not grow in Christian stature in spite of efforts in follow-up. And yet the Scripture would lead us to expect a rapid growth in depth and power towards Christ, fellow Christians and the world, as an immediate result of the preaching of the Cross. Our experience of Gospel work in England, France, Germany and Switzerland has confirmed this and made us question our own work. Partnership with other Christians doing similar work has shown us that we are not alone in this dissatisfaction with the depth of work compared with breadth.

It seems to us that the principles of thought put forward in Dialectical Materialism—with the severe reservations mentioned earlier on—might help us all here. The preaching of the Gospel today consists largely, and quite rightly so, in proclaiming that Christ has died for our sins to give us perfect pardon for ever before God, and that we can and need do nothing at all in addition to this. He has imputed to us with the pardon a perfect sanctification as a free gift, making us fit for God's company and for heaven, if we accept Him as Saviour and receive the pardon offered. All this has

nothing to do whatsoever with our own righteousness or works. Christ has done all and we can and should do nothing in addition. In fact, good works, if done with any intention towards merit, are frowned upon as tending towards Roman Catholicism and legalism.

Now all this is, of course, perfectly true and scriptural, perfectly good reformed doctrine. But is it all? We are of the opinion that, if this is all we have to say in principle in the presentation of the Gospel, then we are perpetrating a caricature of the same. For a caricature is a recognisable likeness of, say, a person, but one in which certain features are exaggerated and some suppressed. If the subject of the caricature has a weakly developed chin, the caricaturist may leave it out altogether. If his nose is a trifle long it is made to reach well beyond his chin. If his forehead is retreating it is made to resemble that of a chimpanzee. Thus one obtains an easily recognisable likeness, one which may contain all the main features in reality present in the subject, but one which is not to be taken very seriously because the proportions are all awry, some features being over and some under-presented, which precisely makes the joke of things. Indeed, any caricature, even though it may be perpetrated in the presentation of the Gospel of Christ, is not likely to produce much seriousness of life or gravity of mind. It may, indeed, be highly interesting, and even catch the public eye, but in effect it will not yield much beyond interest and maybe amusement.

This is the reason why the Apostle Paul laboured night and day with tears to present the whole balanced Gospel and withheld nothing that would serve to the perfecting of his hearers (Acts 20:27-31). Apparently

## WHY DOES GOD ALLOW IT?

he well knew the caricaturising effect of a partial or one-sided presentation of God's plan of salvation.

In the Bible the relationship between Christ and the Christian is often symbolised by that existing between the bridegroom and the bride. How right it is, then, to insist that, if the bridegroom had not loved and chosen the bride in the first place, no marriage could ever have been envisaged. In the last analysis everything depends on his love, and she has only to say "yes" to him to make all the good of it hers. Thus, Christ's love is the very basis of our salvation; if He had not loved us first, we should never have had the chance to love Him at all. This side of the Gospel is very faithfully preached and emphasised, as mentioned above.

But how wrong it is to leave out the rest of the story. Because Christ loved us first and He, the Bridegroom, has done everything for us, the bride, the bride has the power in her hands to bring the relationship to consummation. If she just basks in the bridegroom's love and does nothing else, if she does not as actively respond to his love as he actively courts her, a very unsatisfactory relationship, to say the least of it, is bound to ensue. And yet, it seems to us, that in so many cases exactly this side of the Gospel is under-presented widely today, although it is just as necessary for Christian growth as the other side.

One can scarcely imagine a sensible bride conceiving that the bridegroom's love and choice of herself are sufficient in themselves for a successful marriage and that all she has to do to make one is thankfully accept all the bridegroom offers, otherwise doing very little. There are, of course, everywhere such misguided crea-

tures who live in this type of fool's paradise, but the effectiveness of such marriage relationships need not be discussed here. The chief person to be disappointed will surely be the bridegroom, because a bride of such calibre will probably not be capable of much more disappointment in her life than that from which she has suffered beforehand—resulting, of course, from this attitude towards love and sacrifice in general.

At our conversion to Christ we saw Him crucified for us, then resurrected and interceding for us at God's right hand. It was this unmerited love towards us that won our hearts. We gained confidence in Him and placed our lives in His hands, sure that our confidence was not misplaced. One who so loved us must be trustworthy towards us and merits our whole love and life, for He did not even regard the Godhead itself as something to cling to, if it stood in the way of our being won to Him. Christ gained, won, me at Calvary.

But, in Philippians 3 the Apostle Paul says what looks to be the exact reverse of this. He says that he, Paul, forsook all things, regarding them as dross that he might gain or win Christ. Paul, the experienced Christian, the Apostle, talks about personal effort of the highest order, namely losing all things to gain Christ. Obviously, he is not talking about his conversion or salvation as such here, because one does not have to lose all things to gain that, or salvation would be by works, and not the free gift of the Son of God. But is he perhaps not sure of his salvation even at the Philippian stage of his Christian career? There is so much to prove in Holy Scripture that he had no doubt about this point and glorified in his assurance of salvation, that it is surely superfluous to go into this question.

## WHY DOES GOD ALLOW IT?

The answer to the Apostle Paul's meaning in using the term "to gain Christ" is simple if one takes again the illustration used above. When a young man meets the woman of his choice, she gains his heart and confidence, he wants her and loves her—in just the same manner, in principle, as Christ gained our hearts and confidence when we were confronted with Him in the Gospel. But this is by no means the end of the story. The grand question, the one which the young man wants answering with all dispatch, is the reciprocal one—has he gained her heart exactly as she has gained his? The new relationship, to be happy, has to be exactly reciprocal. It is miserable if the love on either side is not equally consuming, if she loves him less than he loves her, or vice versa. But if there is a one hundred per cent gaining of each other's love and confidence, what a revolution is in the offing for two peoples' lives! And it does not exactly depend even on the "quality" or "quantity" of the love either, the capacity of each partner to love, it merely depends on each giving himself or herself entirely, one hundred per cent, to the other without reservation.

The same principles apply exactly in matters Christian. For on the Damascus road Christ met Paul, and Christ won Paul's total confidence, Christ gained him body, soul and spirit in that interview and established the basis for a new relationship. Paul now proceeded to spend his whole life in making this relationship entirely reciprocal and mutual, i.e. in gaining Christ's confidence exactly as Christ had gained his. He, the Apostle, knew exactly what to do. Christ gave all to gain Paul; then Paul will, of course, regard all things as loss to gain Christ. Only by matching love with equal love can

true love's fruits be born and nourished. If one partner holds back, no glorious new love-relationship can ever be born, either in human matters or those divine. Paul was not uncertain of his salvation—Christ's love to him and Christ's pardon—when he spoke of his efforts to gain Christ. He was merely expressing the fact that total love must be matched with total love, if there is to be a personal revolution in the relationship between two partners.

And this is where the principles of Dialectical Materialism mentioned above come in—with the severe restrictions outlined. For the revolutionary situation to arise, action must be matched by reaction over a period of time. This will gradually change conditions in a system or in society or between two persons until, suddenly, the entirely new, the revolutionary situation, arises, something that was never present beforehand and which ousts or transforms all the old relationship or situation. It is so in the human sphere when a man meets and courts the woman of his choice. Little by little, his action is followed by her reaction, action and reaction, until the realisation of a new, a revolutionary, situation bursts upon them and total love and sacrifice are matched by total love and sacrifice bearing power, happiness and endless possibilities for the present and the future for them both.

For the same to happen in our Christian lives, the same principles apply. As we understand, little by little, how much the Lord Jesus Christ has done for us, how many actions of His were and are made with us in view, as action by action His great love towards us becomes clear, we must begin to match each recognised action with our corresponding reaction. As this process

## WHY DOES GOD ALLOW IT?

goes on, our relationship towards Him will begin to change, the more so as we match consciously and conscientiously each action with our reaction. We shall begin to grow in Christian stature, maybe at first almost imperceptibly. When, however, the "revolutionary situation" is reached and total action is matched by our total reaction (however small our capacity), when total love is matched by our total love (however small our love capacity), then the new relationship will blossom out into love, joy, peace, power, endurance, long-suffering and all the other fruit of the Spirit, whom God gives freely to those who love and obey Him. The new, the revolutionary, relationship has been born, to be maintained for ever in a new order.



## A LOWER STANDARD OF LIVING

THE Western World—and in a certain sense the Eastern World behind the iron curtain—proclaims far and wide the intention of doing everything to raise standards of living. The workman should have a better wage and more leisure time. Parents should be able to offer more to their families and not only this in respect of better food and living conditions, but also in respect of travel, sport, holidays, books, cinema, television, etc. And who today would question this tendency? It is surely better to spend money for such purposes rather than for rearmament?

In many countries a great deal has been done in this direction. Especially in the United States is this the case, where the standard of living has risen most steeply. Every household there possesses today more machines and automatic installations than ever before. In England, too, even the so-called poorly paid workers can usually afford a small car and a television set, besides the necessities of life. When one compares this situation with that of the Industrial Revolution, one can only be glad that the “poor” are no longer poor, and that they are able to afford something besides the bare necessities of life from the sweat of their brow. It surely is a good thing that a mother of several children can afford an automatic washing machine, so that she may have more time for her children and her husband.

## WHY DOES GOD ALLOW IT?

These labour-saving devices belong, of course, to the raised standard of life, and are very sensible, so long as they do not become their owner's masters and contribute to the development of egoism. However, today it very often does happen that too much money to spend and too much leisure time on hand lead to dissatisfaction, and even to delinquency, especially among the juvenile classes. Too much money and too much time are so easily put to wrong uses that they often make a serious contribution to the ruination of morals and character. But apart from the misuse of the raised standard of living, one must in general be thankful for all that is offered us.

Perhaps it has never struck us that Jesus Christ, before He came to the earth nearly two thousand years ago, was used to the very highest standard of living possible: "Our Lord Jesus Christ . . . was *rich*" (2 Corinthians 8:9). He lived at a very high standard, if one may dare express oneself thus, as Son of the Creator Himself, through whom the Creator created the cosmos. He said Himself once that He had occupied the place of honour by God the Father and that angels were ready at His beck and call to do whatever He commanded. Once His disciples were permitted to see some of His glory as the Son of Glory on the Mountain of Transfiguration. This marvellous scene, during which Moses and Elijah conversed with Him and with one another on the exodus, which He was about to make at Jerusalem on the Cross (what greater contrast could there be between the glory of the Transfiguration and the humiliation of the Cross?), positively stunned the disciples: "And as He prayed, the fashion of His countenance was altered, and His raiment was white and

glistening. And, behold, there talked with Him two men, which were Moses and Elias; who appeared in glory, and spake of His decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem. . . . They saw His glory" (Luke 9: 29-32).

The standard of living at the right hand of the Majesty on High exceeds anything we can imagine with respect to power, might, glory, joy and plenitude: "In Thy presence is *fulness of joy*; at Thy right hand there are *pleasures for evermore*" Psalm 16:11). It is not only magnificent, glorious, there at the right hand of God, the Father, which is the seat of honour of the Son, but it is also the seat of government, of majesty, from which the cosmos is governed. Moses and Elijah were in this high majesty when Jesus conversed with them on the mount. We need continually to remind ourselves that Jesus, the Lamb of God, is the centre of this upper glory and that Moses and Elijah recognised him as such.

But as these two glorified saints conversed with Him, they forgot the high majesty of their surroundings in dealing with one single subject of conversation, the subject being a certain decease, a certain exodus, which Jesus was about to fulfil in Jerusalem (Luke 9: 31).

What exactly was this decease about which they conversed so earnestly? It was the exodus of the Lord Jesus Christ from this life, His death on the Cross, where He died for my sins and for the sins of the whole world. When this subject came up, all who took part in the discussion forgot the Transfiguration which surrounded them and concentrated on the awful contrast to it—the death of the Author of life. How could we expect Moses and Elias, who knew Jesus as the Son of

## WHY DOES GOD ALLOW IT?

God on the right hand of the Majesty on high, to understand that this glorified Second Person of the Trinity, who had always lived in glory and the highest position in heaven, should now end His earthly life in blood, spittle, with brutal Roman soldiers and fleeing disciples? It is no wonder that they wished to discuss it with Him beforehand, before watching the dreadful scene from their heavenly vantage point. Why should He wish to exchange the highest for the lowest, the glorious robes of the Transfiguration for the furrowed, raw, beaten back of a criminal? No wonder they needed a personal talk, a personal explanation, of this planned decease at Jerusalem. Without explanation from Him Himself they would not be satisfied in the glory.

Perhaps Jesus, in the course of this conversation, told them that He was perfectly willing to forego the glory, if He could by these means undo Satan's work and save men. If He could, by foregoing His rights—for the glory was His by right—win the love of His creatures and prove His love to them, He would do so. *This was precisely Jesus' attitude to a higher standard of living.* He had a perfect right to this higher standard of living; it fitted His real character; but He voluntarily forewent it in pure love towards mankind. We, too, even as Christians, have no doubt a right to certain things connected with a higher standard of living here as men and women in this world. How much we partake of it will depend upon the same consideration as guided Jesus in His choice—that is, if we are guided by the same spirit that was in Him.

It is very good of people to make us presents of things which do not lower their standard of living. They need not do them, maybe, and one admires and

is thankful for the kind thoughts behind such actions. But if anyone gives to another in need to the extent that he has quite definitely to lower his own standard of living, such giving is not merely just kind, it is love in the Divine sense of the word, for it is giving in love as God gives. And that is exactly how Jesus Christ gave: He gave so that it really hurt, He sacrificed, He forewent. Although He was rich, yet, after much consideration and weighing the position with respect to helping us and winning our love, He decided to become poor: "Let this mind be in you (let this frame of mind be in you) which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross. *Wherefore* God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name" (Philippians 2:5-9).

One must not think that the high glory of the right hand of the throne of authority of the Father is in any sense of the word something to be slurred over today. The socialistic world in which we live often does not like regal glories and splendour, and thinks them waste. But we must remember that the message of the Gospel invites all men, after forgiveness of their sin and renewing of their hearts and minds according to the Gospel, to just such a scene, to be where Jesus Himself is. The Gospel holds out such promises of glory as something supremely attractive. So that living at such a high standard where Jesus together with God, the Father, and the angels live, must be the supreme

## WHY DOES GOD ALLOW IT?

fulfilment of the purpose of our creation. This means that the possession of goods and glory and enjoying the same is intrinsically not wrong. However, when the question of redemption arose, Jesus was ready to forego all this, although the possession thereof was in itself not wrong. His attitude was to hold on nothing which, by giving up, increased the chances of redemption of mankind. God has *lent* us for this life all sorts of things—money, possessions, family, honour, health, etc.—and we can rejoice in these things, as the Bible indeed commands us to do. When, however, the question of the redemption of our fellow men arises and we cling on to any of these things at any price, it is then that we manifest a different spirit to that which was in Jesus. He sacrificed all privileges, rights and goods to facilitate the work of redemption. Thus, He forewent that which is intrinsically good in order to gain that which is intrinsically more excellent.

The same principles should guide every child of God today in this world of rising standards of living. It may be good to have a better standard of living if we are undernourished, poorly clothed and so overworked that we have not time for our God or for ourselves. But equally, it is certainly not good if we, by the raised standards of living, pamper ourselves, become egoistical, have time hanging so heavily on our hands that we misuse it and our characters begin to suffer. But, if we wish to be Jesus' disciples, if we really intend to rise up and follow Him, then that frame of mind with regard to these things must be in us as it was in our Master. This will be the reason why revivals of evangelical Christianity have always made the arrogant (those showing off their own importance, power,

money, intelligence—if any) humble, have made the rich carefully control their expenditure, so as to have more to give to the poor—and to missionary enterprise; have made the poor hard working, so as to have something over to give to God's servants, and have made the lazy industrious for the same reason. There is great doubt to be cast on the value of any revival movement if these practical consequences do not follow it; for they are the consequences of the frame of mind of the Lord Jesus—the willingness to sacrifice themselves. For the Christian, the redemption of his fellow men is worth any sacrifice—that is, if the Christian is of Jesus' attitude of mind in this matter.

When we speak of foregoing things for Christ's sake, we do not mean just foregoing those things that we can well do without, as, for example, say tobacco, which, in addition to being expensive, is known in and outside scientific circles to be damaging to the body, which is the temple of the Holy Ghost. Its association with lung cancer must make any serious Christian think many times before risking damaging the body God gave him. If we stop at such obvious things as the one mentioned, we shall not get far in reaching Jesus' frame of mind. What really counts is the willingness of mind to live at a lower standard than the one to which one has a perfect right.

George Müller once said that he never gave away even a penny of the money he received in the misapprehension that the possession of it in itself was wrong. He did not give even his pennies because the possession of them weighed on his conscience. He prayed, often for long periods, until he knew where he could *best* sacrifice the penny to gain most profit in

## WHY DOES GOD ALLOW IT?

extending God's Kingdom. Each penny for him was very important, as he very often did not possess even the barest necessities of life. But he gave wisely and after much consideration. The idea of *wasting* money and goods was foreign to him—as it should be to us. Jesus, too, did not throw aside the glory as though it were valueless. He invested it so as to give the greatest profit. So never let us simply give for giving's sake, throw away the means to a high standard of living simply to relieve our conscience. This is not Jesus' mind. Whatever we do—whether it be giving for God's work, buying things for our own homes, so that we can exercise hospitality according to the Scriptures, or foregoing things, so that we can give to others—let it all be for the purpose of gaining the maximum profit in the extension of God's Kingdom.

If a disciple of Christ takes up his cross daily in following Jesus, he needs both hands to do it. This means that other things will have to fall out of his hands. He will have to forego them in holding the cross with both hands. *This foregoing so as to take up the cross, is what gives a man the joy which Jesus knew in doing exactly the same.* What could please the Son of God more than seeing His own frame of mind being developed in His own children? For this frame of mind God has highly exalted Him, given Him a name above every other name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow and every tongue confess, to the glory of God the Father. The same rewards await the same frame of mind in His children, for where He is He wills that they be also.



## HONEY

Judges 13:2-14; 24-25; 14:5-9; 14b.

**A** DANITE and his wife had been going through very difficult times. They had been hit by all sorts of trouble, both inside their family life and outside it, too. Their land had suffered many years from the terror of the Philistines, who carried out raids, and among other things burnt up their corn. Within their family life their trouble was that they had no child, no heir. But the couple lived a very happy married life together in spite of this, so that God was able to speak to them and carry out by their means a great plan of salvation for his people.

But let us not go on too quickly. Have we any right to say that the Danite and his wife lived a happy married life? One day an angel of God came to the wife and promised her a son who would be a Nazarite unto God from his birth, upon whom no razor should ever be used. He would begin to save Israel out of the hands of the Philistines. And because the son was to be entirely dedicated to God, the woman was admonished from now on to eat nothing unclean and to take neither wine nor strong drink. Hardly had she finished this conversation with the angel than she ran straight to her husband and told him everything. Now if a woman can go straight to her husband and tell him of her deepest religious experiences without hesitating a moment, that woman has pretty much heart under-

## WHY DOES GOD ALLOW IT?

standing with her husband. Apparently she was not afraid that (a) he would have no time for her, (b) he would say that she was dreaming, that her mind was deranged, she had been hoping so long for a son that her mind was cracking under the strain or even (c) that she talked too much. She had perfect confidence in him, telling him everything about the talk with the angel. How many wives today can do the same? Is that the reason why God can give us so few Samsons in our Christian families? If married couples in Christian circles have anything less than that of Manoah and his wife in their married relationship, they have no right to expect children who will commence the redemption of God's people from the hands of their enemies.

But let us look one step further. When his wife talked about the angel and the promise of a son, he did not laugh, nor call her hysterical, he was perfectly serious with her—so serious, in fact, that they both went to prayer immediately, he *intreating* the Lord. This was no cold, dead sort of prayer, no matter of form. And in his prayer he did not even pray: "Let the man of God come again to *me*", but he prayed: "Come again unto *us*" (Judges 13:8). He wanted to be taught *together with his wife* what God's will was for them both as a single unit before God. What unity is here manifested in a married couple even in Old Testament times! How pleased God must have been to see a couple like it! It is no wonder that He could trust them with a Samson. How many married couples can say to the end of their days: "O Lord, teach us!"

The first church in Jerusalem was built up just on this positive basis of unity and happiness in the families:

“And they continued stedfastly in the apostle’s doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. And fear came upon every soul . . . And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from *house to house*, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart” (Acts 2:42–43 and 46). The houses in which one can break bread daily are those in which meat can be eaten with gladness and singleness of heart. They are not the houses where father and mother just manage to put up with one another, making some sort of show of a respectable marriage. They are homes where father and mother positively love one another and are really happy to be together as God’s children. Such homes are the pillars of a church where God’s spirit can really work as described in the Acts.

It was the Apostle Peter, who was an experienced married man—the Scripture speaks of his mother-in-law (Mark 1:30) and the Apostle Paul speaks of Peter’s wife (1 Corinthians 9:5) in spite of all that certain friends say about his being the first Pope!—who recognised the importance of this fact. He wrote that prevailing prayer was directly dependent on a man’s relationship to his wife. If Christian men do not *honour* their wives—and we use honour advisedly, just as the Scriptures do—their family prayers will not go much higher than the ceiling (1 Peter 3:7). Thus the power in family life decides here the power of prayer, and both are dependent on a man honouring his wife.

Samson went with his parents down to Timnath, and as they walked through the vineyards, a young lion roared against him. The spirit of God came upon Samson and he sprang over the hedge, chased the lion,

## WHY DOES GOD ALLOW IT?

caught him up and ripped him as one rends a kid. And, adds the Scriptures, he had nothing in his hand. In fact, after he had done this feat, he did not even bother about telling his parents. He must have been a very matter-of-fact sort of a person, in no way filled with his own importance, but then men of God of all ages have been like that. Young lions do not usually let themselves be rent like a kid. Samson must have had enormous strength. And yet he remained almost shy about it.

A few days later Samson returned with his parents by the same route, and as they were passing the spot, Samson slipped off over the hedge into the vineyards to see if the body of the young lion were still there. It was, and as he approached it, he was greeted by thousands of bees. It did not take him long to find out where the hive was. In the East there are certain types of the bee family which do choose dead bodies to live in even today. Samson took some of the honey and ate it as he turned back to his parents. His parents, being weary from the journey, were very glad to accept their son's offer of honey, but asked no questions about where it came from. After having eaten, they were all strengthened for the journey by the honey from the lion's body.

Why did the Holy Ghost take the trouble to have all this carefully written up for us? Surely, in itself, the whole matter is quite trivial? Why is it, then, recorded in the Holy Scriptures? The Apostle Paul says that *all* these old histories were written up for us because they have a symbolic meaning, especially for those who live in the end times (1 Corinthians 10:6). It is in this light that we would like to look into this little history.

Who is the lion who roared against the man Samson walking in the power of the Spirit of God? "Your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter 5:8). The devil, Satan, roars against all men and women, but especially against those who are, so to speak, Nazarites, those separated unto God's service. Such have to withstand him in faith, just as Samson did.

But have we remarked this particular fact about Samson? He withstood the lion *alone* in the power of the Spirit. Not even his parents saw this battle royal. Is it not so that most battles with the devil take place when we are alone, in the secret of our own heart? Even our parents and friends, who otherwise are accompanying us on our journey through life, rarely see the fight, even though it takes place not far away from the "road". Jesus withstood the devil alone when He was forty days in the wilderness, and used the Word of God, the sword of the Spirit, as his sole weapon. Samson's weapon was, of course, the Spirit of God which fell upon him. Thus he was sure of the victory.

A second point to notice is that Samson's victory over the lion brought certain consequences with it. The carcass of the lion lay in the vineyard only a short time, and then the bees came and used it to store their honey. Shortly it could be said, therefore, that "out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness" (Judges 14:14). *The victory of Samson, the man of God, over the lion brought honey with it, and honey is sweet, makes strong and refreshes.* When Jonathan was going through the forest after pursuing his enemies, he found wild honey and stretching out his staff, plunged it into the honey and ate it.

## WHY DOES GOD ALLOW IT?

The physiological effect in a tired man is described in the words of the Scripture elegantly—his eyes brightened (were enlightened) (Samuel 14:27).

So we can say that honey by its sweetness quickens and strengthens a man, lightens up his eyes when over-fatigued. Samson experienced the same thing, together with his parents, when they ate the honey originating from the vanquished foe, the lion. And so it is for us today in the Christian life. God's children, who, in the most secret places of their heart, where other people do not see, experience by the Spirit of God victory over Satan and sin, are able to take honey—strength, joy and refreshment—out of the body of the dead lion. The consequences of victory in secret over Satan are always those given in the story of Samson. Every victory gives new strength, new joy to the victor—honey, in fact.

Of course, if, when the Christian meets the roaring lion, he, the Christian, is vanquished, there is no place for honey to be stored. The vanquished Christian does not have therefore the lightened eyes and the renewed strength for the further journey. Perhaps this is the reason why so many Christians have dead-looking eyes—the inward victory is lacking. And inward secret victory every day will produce lightened-up eyes every day and renewed strength to continue. Therefore, says Solomon: "My son, eat thou honey, because it is good; and the honeycomb, which is sweet to thy taste" (Proverbs 24:13). Every victory over sin, lying, hatred, gossiping, unkind criticism, discourtesy, anger, uncleanness, intemperance, unbelief brings a lightening up of the eyes—brings honey.

The last point to remember concerns Samson's

## HONEY

parents, who did not even know, and perhaps did not even ask, where the honey came from of which they partook. The man of victory, Samson, was not only able to feed himself, *he had something to give to others too*. And thus it should be with every dedicated Christian. He should be able to feed himself on the fruits of victory by the Spirit of God, *and also feed others*. Solomon said that the lips of the righteous *feed many* (Proverbs 10:21). Then the words of the Scriptures will be true for us too: "Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness" (Judges 14:14).

## DELILAH

Judges 15: 14-20; 16: 3-31.

**S**AMSON was a Nazarite, a man entirely given up to the service of God, so that he had to keep himself outwardly and inwardly pure in every respect. Even before his birth his mother was not allowed to drink any alcohol or to eat anything impure. From the day of his birth to the day of his death he was under the power of the Nazarite's vow.

An important sign of his Nazarite vow consisted in his never allowing a razor on his head. The Apostle Paul knew what this meant when he shaved his head at Cenchrea (Acts 18: 18) because he was under a vow, and all the days of this vow his hair was not cut, to show that the vow was still in force. Samson's vow lasted all his life, so that no razor was supposed to touch his head all this time. He was surely an imposing sort of a person to meet on a dark night, with his hair down his back and his face all overgrown. But anybody meeting him in those days knew exactly what this meant—this was a man with a Nazarite's vow, entirely given up to the service of God all his days. Samson being at God's disposal entirely, God was entirely at Samson's disposal, which accounts for the mighty victories of his life. Let us look for a moment at some of these victories.

1. When the Philistines ruled over the Israelites and terrorised them, the great difficulty in Israel was the



## DELILAH

lack of corn. The Philistines were always stealing and destroying the corn, even the standing corn, at that period. This disorganised the people and impoverished them. Samson, however, solved this problem with an ass's jawbone. In the power of the Spirit, without any organisation, with no army or soldiers to help him, he went out and won a great victory. All he needed was God's Spirit, and then even an ass's jawbone sufficed.

The "Israelites" of today, God's children in New Testament times, also suffer from a similar plague. The "Philistines" take good care to destroy the corn, that many-sided and complete nourishment of a spiritual nature by which they live, so that the children of God become weak and impoverished. They suffer very much from the fact that the "Philistines" have often removed the many-sided spiritual food they need and replaced it by a one-sided diet. The Scripture has ordained for our spiritual welfare that each church should be served by many gifts in a plurality of ministering brothers, as described in 1 Corinthians 14:26: "How is it then brethren? When ye come together, *everyone* of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation?"

For spiritual growth, as in natural growth, we need a very varied diet containing all the main elements, together with the trace elements necessary for healthy growth. Mankind has been careful to fiddle with rice and to polish it, wheat is extracted extravagantly to give snow-white flour, thereby removing in both cases something the body needs and without which it becomes seriously ill. Whole wheat and whole rice are both balanced and health-giving. So it is in our spiritual life; if we have in our spiritual diet only those things

## WHY DOES GOD ALLOW IT?

which tickle our fancy and always run to the preacher who suits us best, instead of getting the mixed diet from the gifts which God has given according to the New Testament promise in every Church, then the "Philistines" have been at work and burnt our corn. It is one of the most important works of the enemy of God's Church to weaken, pollute and destroy the spiritual nourishment of His people. The system by which only one man by a fixed law ever gives spiritual nourishment is bound to result in a one-sided diet which leads to spiritual illness. For we are all, even the best of preachers, one-sided to some extent. It would be an arrogant preacher who denied this. We are speaking, of course, of spiritual nourishment for Christians in the Church. For Gospel ministry things are probably different, for, during the Apostle Paul's stay in Lystra he became known as Hermes (Mercury) because he always did the speaking (Acts 14:12). But where ministry among Christians is concerned, the New Testament always speaks of freedom of ministry for those who have the gift. If this order of freedom is practised, a varied spiritual diet will result—if there is no hindrance of God's Spirit by sin—and spiritual health will be the result. Samson was just the man to free his people from their impoverished diet caused by the depredations of the Philistines. God's Church could do with a few more Samsons today.

2. But there was a second secret behind Samson—to wit, that of his domicile. He lived in the cleft of the rock. If we wish to have Samson's power we must have the same domicile, too—the cleft of the rock which is Jesus (1 Corinthians 10:4). When the haste, worries and grumbles of modern life succeed in moving us from

## DELILAH

our domicile, if we do not remain in Him permanently, we cannot expect Samson's power.

3. Samson went to Gaza to his enemies, and when he had arrived in the town they set a watch for him until midnight to kill him. But at midnight he arose and carried the gates of the city, together with their posts and bolts, on his shoulders to the top of the mount over against Hebron. Even in the enemy's camp he won mighty victories, for a town without gates and bars was not able to defend itself against its enemies.

It is comparatively easy to live a nice Christian life in Christian circles, but a different thing altogether to be a victor in the midst of the enemy's camp—in the midst of hatred, enmity, arguments and dishonesty small and great. Here great power is required to disarm an enemy by a wise word, even though it be severe and unpalatable. How difficult it is to be courteous when discourtesy reigns in the enemy's camp! But it was right there that Samson showed the mighty strength of God's Spirit, and it was the very enemy's camp that he totally disarmed.

4. Now comes a rather more difficult point in Samson's history. He went down to Gaza and turned in at a harlot's house, who, of course, betrayed him to the Gazites, so that he had to get up at midnight and carry off the gates of the city to save himself. Surely this story brings out something to encourage the weakest and the strongest among us. Without wishing in any way to presume on God's goodness, it is obvious that Samson's victorious life was associated with defeat, too. The greatest victors in God's camp will always admit to very present weakness. Spirit-filled people cannot be *slaves* of sin, even though they may stumble

## WHY DOES GOD ALLOW IT?

from time to time. Samson stumbled here, and yet God was kind to him, evidently seeing that he did not premeditate wickedness in his heart. One can go too far, as we shall see later, but Samson had not yet reached this point. God's victory is never a form of perfectionism, but consists in standing up again after having come short and stumbled, asking for forgiveness from one's whole heart after having sinned.

5. After Samson's mighty victory over the Philistines with the ass's jawbone the Scriptures do not tell us that he marched away singing "Halleluja" for evermore. We are told that he sank down completely exhausted and in great lowness of spirit. Thirst and weakness, together with unbelief, all took hold of him, and he forgot God's mighty victory almost at once: "And he was sore athirst and called on the Lord, and said, Thou hast given this great deliverance into the hand of Thy servant: and now shall I die for thirst, and fall into the hand of the uncircumcised?" (Judges 15:18). After each mountain-top experience the valley experience is seldom escaped, if we are not very watchful. When Elijah had experienced his marvellous victory over the priests of Baal, he experienced, too, the same thing. Desperation and fear took hold of him, so that he ran away from Jezebel to save his life.

When Samson found himself in this very difficult situation, exhausted and famished, he intreated God, who answered his prayer by cleaving the rock at Lehi where he lived. So Samson drank from this fresh spring of water coming, as it were, directly from God's hand, and his spirit was quickened. He named the place therefore En-hakkore, meaning the spring of him who calls.

But we cannot think of Samson as one who always

## DELILAH

enjoyed this sort of direct victory and direct answer to prayer. A time came when he lost the beauty of holiness and its power totally. One day he fell in love with a Philistine woman called Delilah, who was a sworn enemy of the people of God. This woman was intrigued, as indeed all the Philistines were, with the secret of the prodigious strength possessed by Samson. But Samson did not take her very seriously and played with her. She, on the other hand, took Samson very seriously indeed, and had only one end in view—namely, that of ruining him. She plagued him day and night to tell her the whole secret of his power. But he teased her with such answers as: “If they bind me with seven green withs that were never dried, then shall I be weak, and be as another man” (Judges 16:7). But he was deceiving her, nevertheless, for she had already arranged for men to lie in wait for him in her chamber. Just think of her heartlessness in pretending to respond to his love-making and at the same time having armed men in her private chamber ready to spring on her lover the moment the time came. And think of the foolishness of a Nazarite of God, to flirt with this type of woman and prevaricate the truth. God in His mercy did not leave him at once, and as she called out: “The Philistines be upon thee, Samson” (v. 9) “he brake the withs as a thread of tow is broken when it touches the fire” (v. 9). The source of his strength was not known, and it did not leave him, although he had commenced telling this woman untruths.

The remarkable thing was how “love” could so blind Samson. Even though the Philistines had fallen upon him, thus disclosing Delilah’s perfidy, he still went on fooling with her. And he remained blind as long as he

## WHY DOES GOD ALLOW IT?

fooled. For she asked him for a second time wherein his great power lay: "Behold, thou hast mocked me, and told me lies: now tell me, I pray thee, wherein thou mightest be bound. And he said unto her, If they bind me fast with new ropes that never were occupied, then I shall be weak, and be as another man" (Judges 16:10, 11). Again he allowed himself to be bound by her, and again she had ordered men to lie in wait for Samson. Again, when they rose up against him, he brake the ropes from off his arms like a thread. And again God had been very patient with him; He had not forsaken him in spite of his lying and flirting with this bad woman.

"And Delilah said unto Samson, Hitherto thou hast mocked me, and told me lies: tell me wherewith thou mightest be bound. And he said unto her, If thou weavest the seven locks of my head with the web. And she fastened it with the pin, and said unto him, The Philistines be upon thee, Samson. And he awaked out of his sleep, and went away with the pin of the beam and with the web" (Judges 16:13-14). Delilah, the Philistine woman, is a biblical symbol for sin, and Samson was playing with her sinfully. The secret of his power was a secret of God, not to be betrayed to the enemies of God. And this form of folly led here to something new. We read for the first time that he awaked out of his *sleep*. Playing with sin brings on spiritual sleepiness. Samson did not know while he was asleep what his enemies were doing with him. And neither do Christians who get sleepy in their life and testimony guess what Satan, who is not at all sleepy, is hatching against them. This time, too, he almost betrayed to her his whole heart, for he started to speak

## DELILAH

about the seven locks of his head. And the seven locks of his head were the outward sign of his inward devotedness to God under his Nazarite vow.

And now the last lap leading to his final fall is quickly completed: "And it came to pass, when she pressed him daily with her words, and urged him, so that his soul was vexed unto death; That he told her all his heart, and said unto her, There hath not come a razor upon mine head; for I have been a Nazarite unto God from my mother's womb: if I be shaven, then my strength will go from me, and I shall become weak, and be like any other man. And when Delilah saw that he had told her all his heart, she sent and called for the lords of the Philistines, saying, Come up this once, for he hath showed me all his heart. Then the lords of the Philistines came up unto her, and brought money in their hand. And she made him sleep upon her knees: and she called for a man, and she caused him to shave off the seven locks of his head; and she began to afflict him, and his strength went from him. And she said, The Philistines be upon thee, Samson. And he awoke out of his sleep, and said, I will go out as at other times before, and shake myself. *And he wist not that the Lord was departed from him.* But the Philistines took him, and put out his eyes, and brought him down to Gaza, and bound him with fetters of brass; and he did grind in the prison house" (Judges 16: 16-21).

Samson lost all his power when he disclosed and gave his heart to the world. And the remarkable thing is that Samson did not know, even though he had been a mighty man of God, that God had departed from him. At the moment he did not know that his seven locks, the outward sign of his inward alliance, were gone too,

## WHY DOES GOD ALLOW IT?

otherwise he might have been better prepared. So blind and so powerless had sin made him. And it went even further than that, for the Philistines rapidly overpowered him and put his eyes out, so that the final darkness was too terrible to think about.

The same situation applies spiritually, too. Playing with sin leads to sleepiness, and in our moments of ensuing unwatchfulness, Satan rapidly comes and steals even the outward signs of our dedication to God. The inward dedication was already gone. But sin had so anaesthetised Samson that he did not even know that the inward dedication was gone together with the outward signs of it. How tragic it is to see Christians in just the same position! They are dissatisfied, maybe, but would never admit that their inward dedication, and perhaps the outward signs of it, too, were both gone. Sleepiness in spiritual matters takes away the simplest forms of self-knowledge.

But the Philistines rapidly came and completed the job of openly bankrupting Samson. They put out his eyes, which was final. In the end, the Christian who plays with sin once too often may lose the faculty of spiritual insight completely and forever. He may search in vain for light after having passed the point of no return. How dreadful and how serious a warning for every child of God. Esau sought repentance with tears and found it not. The Hebrew Epistle teaches the same when it says: "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come (—let no one prevaricate the truth in saying that such ones were not true Christians) if *they*



shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God *afresh* (—He once had been their Saviour), and put Him to an open shame" (Hebrews 6:4-6). Sight can be put out even in those who had had great spiritual insight at one time, if sin is played with once too often. God was very patient with Samson, and is very patient with us. But this does not allow for doing despite to the grace of God. Then the Philistines come and make their work public.

The last consequence of all this was that poor Samson, blind and miserable, had to grind corn for the Philistines. Instead of being dedicated to God and looking after His interests, Samson had to work for His very enemies. Every backslidden Christian works for God's enemies, and often most effectively. And the Philistines come and jeer—which also has its spiritual counterpart.

But fortunately this is not the end of the story, for the Philistines went in for a great celebration, with dancing and singing before their gods, to mark the occasion of the fall of Samson, the man of God who now could no longer harm them. In the midst of these celebrations some Philistine or another had a bright idea. It would be wonderful to go down to the prison where Samson, blind Samson, was grinding corn and fetch him and make him dance and act the clown for the amusement of the lords of the Philistines and the assembled people celebrating his very fall. A fallen Christian makes great fun for modern Philistines even today, especially if he has to amuse them and dance before them led by a little boy on account of his blindness. What a terrible picture in respect of Samson—

and in respect to his spiritual counterparts of to-day!

But down in the prison, in the secret of sheer sorrow, something had been happening. Slowly the hairs of his head had started to grow again. In the slavery of the Philistines, in the final darkness behind Samson's blind eyes, God in His great mercy had recommenced His gracious work. The outward growing of his hair was a sign of his inward rededication of his Nazarite vow. As Samson danced, and as the Philistines clapped their hands and beat their breasts, Samson's heart burnt with a fierce burning to do one more work for God, to experience just one more final victory for Him whom he loved. And so Samson entreats the God he had failed: "O, Lord God, remember me, I pray thee, and strengthen me, I pray thee, only this once, O God" (Judges 16:28). He asked the little boy to show him where the two pillars were upon which the house stood, for the Philistine temples and large buildings were built in this way. "Now the house was full of men and women; and all the lords of the Philistines were there; and there were upon the roof about three thousand men and women, that beheld while Samson made sport" (Judges 16:27). "And Samson took hold of the two middle pillars upon which the house stood, and on which it was borne up, of the one with his right hand, and of the other with his left. And Samson said, Let me die with the Philistines. And he bowed himself with all his might; and the house fell upon the lords, and upon all the people that were therein: so the dead which he slew at his death were more than they which he slew in his life" (Judges 16:29-30).

What a glorious ending, and yet what a terrible end-

## DELILAH

ing to such a life! Yet, in spite of everything, Samson found his way back to his Nazarite vow and its inward strength through blackest darkness. Let those who think that God has forsaken them because they have played with sin—and who among us would ever dare assert that he has never done this in the depth of his heart?—remember Samson. God answered his prayer and gave him a more glorious victory, although it cost him his life. But, then, victory in the ways of God often does cost one's very life. Out of the darkest night, even with eyes permanently put out, a last great victory was to be won—and is to be won by everyone who returns to his Nazarite vows. Samson's sins with Delilah brought dreadful consequences and dreadful slavery with them. And so will our sins, even as Christians, too. Yet it is God's plan to bring every born again person, even the backslider, to that position where it can be said of him that Christ leads him in triumphal procession in the victory celebrations in His name: "He leads us around at all times in Jesus' triumphal march" (2 Corinthians 2 : 14, free translation).

## THE WAY OUT OF THE TROUBLE

Galatians 1 : 1-5; Ephesians 5 : 25-26; 1 Timothy 2 : 1-7;  
Titus 2 : 11-14

**I**T will be scarcely necessary to justify the title of this essay. Trouble seems to surround mankind from political, national and international viewpoints and much seems to be decided upon by fear. Hydrogen bombs and fall-out worry people immensely. If our children store too much radio-active strontium in their bones, how will they fare with respect to cancer when they are forty or fifty years old? The currencies of the world are suffering from such a rapid inflation that the average person thinks it nonsense to save money, which will have half its value in ten years' time. So the spending orgies continue to grow in all the Western nations, bringing with them further inflation. Psychiatrists and mental hospitals are ever in increasing demand, people's minds being over-stressed and strained by the killing pace of modern life. Nobody gets down to rest their minds, all must be on the go, and even when they come home from a heavy day the television is turned on, preventing them from solid reflection.

It is comparatively easy for the doctor to classify the various illnesses of the body and the mind and give a perfect diagnosis. But how to prevent them or cure them when they are there is a different matter. In-

sulin and electro-shock therapy are tried in some mental troubles and work therapy is used where possible. But is there a way out of the troubles caused by modern life?

Some time ago I read a most interesting medical article on just this question in a Swiss medical journal (Dr. Hans Nägeli-Osjord, *Praxis*, 9.2.56, p. 109). The title of this article runs: "Depression of Middle Age".

Dr. Nägeli shows that the depressive disturbances of middle life have increased in the last ten years, both in respect to seriousness and frequency. He adds something quite remarkable about the cause of these depressive states which we cite here: "I suspect one of the causes to lie . . . *in the general prosperity of everyone and in the resultant possibility of making one's self (ego) as comfortable as possible.* This gives rise to the "Polycrates-Connex" as I like to call it. Schiller, the poet, was interested in this problem too, and described it: Polycrates, the king and tyrant of Samos, was so completely happy that his wise guest feared for him and recommended him to offer to the gods the best of what he possessed. When then the signet-ring which had been thrown over the cliffs . . . was returned, his guest knew that catastrophe was unavoidable, since the sacrifice had been returned unaccepted."

Dr. Nägeli continues: "Although the present generation has almost lost the belief in progress which was the fashion at the turn of the century, there are still very many who look to the social welfare state for their *peace of mind*. It is very often believed that being a good citizen, taking care to do one's Christian duties, *constant increase in honour and financial fortune, together with the smooth development of one's family,*

*all are an absolute guarantee for mental hygiene and peace of mind.* The author of the drama known as the Book of Job has long since tried to teach us the untruth of this and to direct us to the purposes of God which lead much further."

Thus far Dr. Nägeli. To summarise his thoughts:

1. Mental diseases and neuroses have increased.
2. They are connected with the increased possibility offered us today of making the ego as comfortable as possible.

If we add to this the general haste and fear of modern life, we shall not go very far wrong from the general trend of informed opinion today.

Perhaps it would be as well to add that prosperity in itself, properly used, does not necessarily, of course, lead to illness. As we shall see later, it is only the egotistical use of prosperity that leads to sickness. Added to this is the fact that the present-day world is suffering from a real mania for pleasure and enjoyment. One buys a new car in order to "enjoy" the hills and mountains, fine hotels, etc., before the next inflation or the next war rips everything out of people's hands again. Particularly in Western Germany do we find this spirit of "enjoy everything to the full, even to the point of total exhaustion, physically and mentally". The Germans have even invented a special use of an old verb to express this spirit—"alles mitnehmen" (take or grab everything as you go to "enjoy" it). The Bible would express it as follows: "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die."

Thus there are differing factors in the development of the modern neuroses. Shall we look at one of these

factors more closely : *The ego that has become too comfortable.*

Do we really mean to insist that the ego, or character, of a man can become ill or deformed if it is too comfortable? The answer is yes and no at the same time. If being comfortable degenerates into being an egoist, then yes. If, however, our being comfortable keeps us altruistic in the true sense of the word, the result of the general high standard of welfare will give us no as an answer. Do not imagine we are talking in riddles, for Jesus Himself gave us the same answer when he said: "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35). That is part of the secret of being *blessed*, which really means being supremely happy and satisfied, is to be found in having the *possibility to give*, to sacrifice that which one possesses, use one's self directly or indirectly in the service of others. Prosperity can serve this end in affording us something to give. Jesus did not want to say here, of course, that if a neurotic or a choleric suddenly gives away all he has, he will just as suddenly get better. If we, however, regularly *give* (and this does not mean dropping sixpence in the collection on Sunday morning or giving a beggar twopence to calm one's conscience), this giving will definitely help us in maintaining mental hygiene, for happiness and joyous well-being are the natural fruits of a sound mind. If our minds are happy, they are not so likely to fall into depressive neuroses (barring organic disease, of course).

We are not discussing here giving as an odious duty, and we are not wishing to discuss exclusively the giving of money. Here it is a question of the inward attitude of our hearts to be willing to be at the disposal

## WHY DOES GOD ALLOW IT?

of others, be it in respect of time, money, work, etc. In the Old Testament the Jews possessed outstanding laws for the maintenance of physical and mental hygiene. In order to maintain the Temple system, they had to give at least ten per cent of their total income. But over and above this tax, innumerable freewill offerings were prescribed which they could make on all sorts of national and family occasions, if they wished. Thus it is certain that the pious Jew gave far more than ten per cent of his income, which was the legal amount. The commentary of the Scripture is quite interesting, for it is written that the plagues of Egypt did not touch the Jews. Physically and mentally they were far more healthy than the Egyptians, from whom they escaped.

But the Jews did not only give money. According to their age, tribe and capacity they took a direct part in the Temple service. That is, they sacrificed their time and their abilities. It would be a good thing if Christian circles reverted to the New Testament teaching on this subject, too. For many Christians would grow far more in grace if their service of God consisted of a little more than that of hearing a sermon—good or bad—on a Sunday morning. If they had to prepare to serve others with a well-thought-out *exposé* on God's Word, it would help in the hygiene of their souls for certain. This is not to mention the many other services in the Church which God recommends His children to do if they heed His Word.

But why go into all these details? One would almost imagine that we were interested in some missionary society and in raising funds and services for it. We would certainly be glad if this did result, but that is not the primary reason for mentioning the subject here.



## THE WAY OUT OF THE TROUBLE

The matter is one of principle, and indeed of principle which has almost been forgotten in the socialistic world, particularly in Europe, in which we live.

Man was not created to live for himself, for his own exclusive comfort. If he does live to make his ego as comfortable as possible, he does not harvest the result he was hoping for—namely, happiness. The general result is, that the more he does it, the more a creeping sort of paralysis of misery and dissatisfaction lays hold of him. We deny the purpose of our creation if in our youth our only interest is in getting the easiest sort of work and the cushiest job with a large pension at the end of it. According to a good number of politicians today, there is only one method of freeing mankind from anxiety and misery, and that is the method of social security, less work for more pay, the earliest possible retiring age and no worries about anything. If anyone is ill in the family, the State will look after him, and no one in the family will have to be bothered with nursing night and day. We all know this tendency, so that it does not need describing any more. But lest we should be misunderstood, let it be quite clearly emphasised once more that we are the last people to decry the social advances of the last hundred years. In themselves they are certainly good, and should be welcomed. But let it be equally clearly said that *in themselves* they will never bring happiness to man, even though the politicians affirm it in every election talk. For if these social advances degenerate into making the objects of them egoists more than they were before the social advances arrived, then they will make man more miserable. If,

## WHY DOES GOD ALLOW IT?

however, the advances give a man more goods and money, which he then proceeds to use in the service of others, then the advances really will tend to make people happy. This is what Jesus meant when He said: "He that findeth his life (uses it exclusively for himself) shall lose it: and he that loses his life (loses it for others in their service) for My sake shall find it" (Matthew 10:39). To sum up, to become happy one needs to live for others for Jesus' sake. But have we ever reflected just what this means? The nature of love is contained therein. The God of love who created us did not create us as an end in ourselves; we are not here to serve ourselves, but others. This is in the very nature of love for: "love suffereth long, and is kind; love envieth not; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, *seeketh not her own*" (1 Corinthians 13:4-5).

Love seeketh not her own, is there for others, serves, helps, sacrifices where necessary, and provided love goes about her work with wisdom and common sense, becomes happy in this service. He who only wishes to be served, rapidly degenerates into a disgusting tyrant. Herein lies the reason why wealthy people are often in their heart of hearts so unhappy, even though they have people to wait on them hand and foot. On the other hand, one often finds even the poor washerwoman with a crowd of children round her, earning her living by her work, is psychologically more stable than her wealthy counterpart.

But is this not a remarkable state of affairs? Here we have mankind who is only able to be really happy in being altruistic, and not egoistic. Has not the Designer behind our race slipped up rather badly in giving us

## THE WAY OUT OF THE TROUBLE

such a remarkable mental make-up? Why are we made like this? Why can we not be happy in making only ourselves happy? If we could only find this out, we should find at the same time the key to many another problem in life—in fact, find the way out of a lot of the troubles that plague us. If you were to take a look at our little son and watch him hastily gulping down his food, just full of impatience and energy; if you were to watch his impatient gestures and screams if things do not turn up quick enough for his liking, you would come to one conclusion: he is the son of his father. Everything that he does, reminds people of his father. However, when the meal is over and the little chap is satisfied, he beams in a most friendly way at the world in general, smiling at everyone, and one would imagine that butter would not melt in his mouth. When people watch him in this frame they all say that he is mother's boy. And he certainly is.

Here we have reached the heart of the question. The explanation of so much depends on the origin of the little chap. If you knew his mother and his father, you would not be surprised; it would just explain what you expected. And so it is with regard to mankind in general. If one knows mankind's origin, many things can be explained at once. For we originated in God's mind, and came forth out of his mind. We were made in his image, and it is this image which betrays our origin. Sin has, of course, made somewhat of a caricature of the image, but yet the general likeness is still recognisable. In the same way as children resemble their parents, so our character resembles the character of our heavenly Father, in so far as sin has not completely blotted out the resemblance. And this is the

## WHY DOES GOD ALLOW IT?

explanation of our remarks above, to the effect that man cannot really start to live happily without living *sacrificially*. Which means, of course, that he cannot live successfully without loving and being loved for love seeketh not her own. And this is just how Jesus lived and loved.

But what is the origin of this remarkable character? The only conclusion we can come to is that our Originator must be like it himself, for He says that we are in one sense His children (offspring—Acts 17:29). So we would expect man to resemble his Creator somewhat as a child his parents. Jesus Christ, in revealing the Creator's character to us in the form of a man, showed us that it was the *Creator's nature* to sacrifice Himself for all—that is, to *love* all. This is not, of course, that sort of pseudo-love in which sacrifice is a fetish and a plague to everybody on whom it is exercised. It is the form of love which really jumps into the breach when direly necessary and when no one else can help. Greater love has no man than that he die for his friends. And Jesus went one further and died for His enemies. "Our Lord Jesus Christ, who *gave Himself* for our sins" (Galatians 1:4). "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and *gave Himself* for it" (Ephesians 5:25). Jesus Christ is represented as the loving husband looking after his Church, and this sort of love is given as the example for husbands in married life. We all know to what length His love went, and these lengths should be the limits to our love in marital relationships. So we have the biblical revelation of what it means when God says He is love. It is His very nature.

If then we have only one end in view in this life—

## THE WAY OUT OF THE TROUBLE

that of making our own ego as comfortable as possible—then we shall deny the very deepest nature of our being. Living thus, we are certainly not living as Christians. Our origin in the hands of a God of love demands something better, and it is God's mercy that our inward man will rather become ill than be satisfied with anything less. It is rank misuse of the human personality to try to satisfy it with a form of life which is merely animal in nature—exclusive self-service. It is an insult to our higher origin, and indeed to our higher destiny. The mechanism of our construction can only function properly if we respect both of these aspects—the origin and the destiny. For we not only originated in God's hand as His image, but we are also destined, in so far as we are redeemed, to be transformed into Christ's glorious image at His coming. And this image will be no different from the original one in principle (although more glorious), for *Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever*. Although He will come in judgment, yet He is still the Redeemer of the world with pierced hands and feet, the Lamb sacrificed for the sins of the world.

That is the way out of the trouble. It is a question of living up to our true, God-intended character, responding to the call of the Saviour's character of love and being transformed by this character into the likeness of it, becoming men's servants for Christ's sake. This is what brings true happiness.

## A WHOLESOME DIET

RECENTLY I have had to concern myself with some of the questions of nutrition and vitamin research in connection with metabolic problems. How necessary it is for us all to have a truly varied diet. Scientists are coming more and more to recognise this fact, which incidentally the wiser of our grandmothers knew of and practised. It is not so necessary to eat a lot or to take always the most expensive diets. That can lead us too easily to become slaves of our stomach. What is needed is as much variation as possible, to take care that we receive the right proportions of everything the body requires. If this side of our well-being is looked after, we shall be able to save quite a lot of expenditure on illnesses and medical care.

A certain Dr. A. Jung (*Aerztliche Monatshefte*, 1949/50, p. 629), and others with him, have carried out tests on rats, in which the young animals received a diet of pure casein, pure sugar, a mixture of salts, yeast extract and vitamin A-D-concentrate—that is, a varied and good diet. After seventy to ninety days, during which these rats were allowed to eat as much of this diet as they wished, various serious symptoms began to arise, scales began to appear on the back of their paws, especially the hind paws, and on their knuckles, accompanied by inflammation and swelling. Hair began to fall out and fissures began to appear in the skin. The tail began to develop nodes, looking like the horse-tail

## A WHOLESOME DIET

plant. Finally, in the worst cases, it began to necrose and fall off. The kidneys commenced to fail, weight began to fall off, and in the end the animals died. During this illness the animals were still capable of reproduction, which, however, often resulted in the death of the mother.

All this occurred in animals receiving a varied and plentiful diet. The question was: why? All the vitamins needed that were known were present and yet the animals died. After a great deal of work, it was found that small amounts of the so-called unsaturated fats, such as are contained in linseed oil and sunflower oil, were lacking. If very small amounts of these unsaturated substances were added to the same diet as the rats were already receiving, the animals got better.

But why describe all this in a book of this nature? Although a varied diet is necessary for us, it is not, of course, for that reason entirely that the subject is mentioned here. The reason lies deeper.

The fact is that in one sense, remarkable as it may seem, many Christians find themselves in a similiar position to our experimental rats, at least from a spiritual point of view. They are receiving what they think to be a good varied spiritual diet, and yet it is, like our experimental rat diet, without the "unsaturated fatty acids" in it, an "extracted" diet. Small amounts, even trace amounts, of the doctrines of the Bible have been removed from it or simply not added to it. The Bible, as it stands, contains all the nourishment, in a spiritual sense, necessary for man's spiritual growth and enjoyment. It is, so to say, a complete diet. But if it is fiddled with, and parts of its contents "destroyed" by criticism or parts of it simply left out in the ministration of the

## WHY DOES GOD ALLOW IT?

Word over the years, then ill and deformed Christians are likely to arise. All sorts of festers, paralysed limbs, aches and pains, are sure to turn up in the course of time, even if the smallest of doctrines are consistently left out of the spiritual nourishment offered in the Christian circle which we attend habitually. This is why the Scripture says: "*All Scripture . . . is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works*" (2 Timothy 3: 16, 17). That is, if the man of God wishes to be perfect and fitted for every good work, he must assimilate the whole Bible, otherwise he will go without correction, reproof and instruction in righteousness. That is, he will become spiritually ill, due to various deficiencies, small or great, in his spiritual diet. He will become like our experimental rats.

One could compare the basic diet needed for arousing a person to his need for Christ, to the preaching of forgiveness of sins through the sacrifice of the Son of God on the Cross. Such texts as 1 John 1: 9 and John 3: 16 would represent this basic necessity, without which no spiritual life would be awakened. This is a necessity for spiritual "reproduction". On their basic experimental diet, which we mentioned at first, our rats were able to reproduce themselves, although they had not all the necessities for life in the long run. In just the same way the preaching of the "simple Gospel" is able to bring about reproduction in the world in bringing men and women to Christ. But this "extracted" diet is by no means enough to *maintain* spiritual health in the long run. Lots of other "trace elements" are necessary for this. If a Church tries to exist by simply offering



Sunday for Sunday and weekday for weekday only John 3:16, the result will be very serious disturbances of spiritual health in a short time. And make no mistake about it, such disturbances will be due solely to the "extracted" diet. The Apostle Paul taught the same thing when he said: "For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep" (1 Corinthians 11:30). The Apostle Paul is giving here his diagnosis of the reason for the ill health in the Church at Corinth, and put it down to a failure in the teaching of the doctrine of discipline at the Lord's Supper. That is, there was a lack in the diet which the Corinthians had received, therefore the Lord's will with respect to the Supper was not respected, the result being spiritual illness.

The Apostle Paul says in the Acts exactly the same thing in another way and connection: "For I have not shunned to declare unto you *all* the counsel of God" (Acts 20:27). It is far easier to declare the pleasant things in the counsels of God and extract the unpleasant things, so necessary for reproof, that a man may be perfect, from the ministry we give. Paul had to do this with tears day and night (Acts 20:31), so that his hearers would be sound, healthy, in the faith.

I was once called upon to preach the Gospel in a church, the pastor of which, together with his whole family, lived a loose life. I had a talk with the presbyters in private, and drew their attention to 1 Timothy 3:4, where the requirements are given to be demanded of one exercising the oversight over a Church. The Apostle Paul pointed out here to Timothy that the life of such a one must be blameless and that he must be able to rule well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity. It was the very opposite

## WHY DOES GOD ALLOW IT?

of this in this dear man's house. Everybody did exactly what he wished, no consideration being offered to others.

When I mentioned the seriousness of the situation to the faithful and believing senior members of the Church, I noticed the furtive looks and worried demeanour of all present. Finally, the spokesman ventured a word to the effect they dare not do anything, because, if they did, and the pastor went away, the Church would find no successor for him. And, in any case, the committee looking after the placement of pastors in their organisation would certainly never consider their insisting on this part of New Testament Church doctrine. The result was that fear, together with Christian organisation (so called), made it necessary to put up with a situation in the Church which made many in the town blaspheme the blessed Name by which we are called. Please do not misunderstand me here. I do not wish to suggest that they should have come down on the poor dear man like a ton of bricks and demanded that he change his ways and those of his family. That would not be in Christian love, or for that matter Christian wisdom either. What was needed was, first of all, the recognition that this part of Christian doctrine is a vital "trace element" in the Christian diet, necessary for spiritual health. The second thing was a Spirit of love and prayer to pray for the good man and show him real love in his need. Then, with much humility, but holy earnestness, one could have begun to talk to the offender, when the time was ripe. But simply to use fear and expediency to neutralise and nullify the Word of God is one of the surest ways of producing either an ill or a completely dead Church.

I noticed that many of the younger people there were already suffering from the root of bitterness mentioned in Hebrews 12:15.

How often have I experienced similar things before Bible-readings and Gospel campaigns! I have been asked in all sorts of back-handed ways not to mention this doctrine or that, for fear of upsetting someone or another. It is perfectly clear that *all* biblical doctrine is *profitable*, provided it is used in love and in the spirit of wisdom given by God. People have been terrified that I might mention the question of believer's baptism and so create "misunderstandings". Even this difficult subject, if handled without harping and lovelessness, is a source of true spiritual *health*. And who are we to dare suppress anything given to us by God for our good? If we do, we shall damage not only our hearers, but ourselves too.

Hebrews 6 mentions some of the things which can be reckoned as the main principles (the basic diet) of the doctrine of Christ. These are absolutely necessary for spiritual health, and illness will quickly result if these basic portions of spiritual diet are in any wise left out. They are *repentance* from dead works, *faith* towards God, the doctrine of *baptisms*, *laying on of hands*, the *resurrection* of the dead and *eternal judgment*. All Christians ought regularly to assimilate the deeper questions of *all* these major points of doctrines. Other points of doctrine which cannot be called cardinal ones should be discussed and assimilated in about the same proportions as they are emphasised in the Bible. Let us not be afraid of the more "indigestible" doctrines, because we think they are likely to cause disunity in the Church. The grace of God should be

## WHY DOES GOD ALLOW IT?

sufficient to prevent quarrelling about God's holy instruction given for our good. Even questions like the inspiration of the Bible can be treated in a manner which is edifying to all, if a suitable spirit of prayer and willingness to win one's brother rather than to win one's point in the argument prevails.

The "extracted" Word, as we have pointed out, can often be sufficient for "reproduction", for it includes the "simple" Gospel. But the deeper things, the matters which are mentioned less often, the "trace elements", are necessary for *maintaining* healthy, growing, life—that is, spiritual life—once it is there. It is a terrible confession of failure not to be able to preach the *whole* counsel of God because we are afraid of strife. In reality it is a lack of Christian love produces strife and which makes us incapable of either receiving or giving the more indigestible parts of the Word of God. Revelation 22 : 18, 19 gives us a commentary on this position : "If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book : and if any man shall *take away* (extract) . . . God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book."

A wholesome diet in our Christian circle will be one regularly providing the totality of the doctrines of the whole Word in the proportion in which they occur there. Those receiving such a diet will so grow in faith that Christ will lead them through life triumphantly according to 2 Corinthians 2 : 14.

## ON FELLOWSHIP

**I**F we ask ourselves what the word fellowship means, the answer will be different according to our upbringing and perhaps profession. The scientists will think of a fellowship in its academic sense, the member of a Church will think of perhaps a Sunday evening meeting and so on. But we all have an idea, certainly, of what the straightforward sense of the word should be. We all know with whom we have fellowship and with whom we cannot find much contact. Perhaps an example, however, will help us to understand the meaning of the word better, in so far, at least, as its general sense is concerned.

A young man is sitting opposite me in the train. I have never seen him before, he is a perfect stranger. I am travelling from Frankfurt to Basel, and as it is a long journey, I make some efforts to start a conversation with him. But this is difficult because, apart from conversations about the weather, it is not obvious what we might have in common to talk about. For the basis of real fellowship, contact is, surely, having something in common. The ticket collector comes round asking for our tickets, and I note that the young man opposite me is also going to Basel. Here I have a point of contact—we are both going to Basel, and I ask him if he knows the city at all. He does not, so we start a conversation based on the various points of interest in that city: the Minster, the Rhine Bridges, the Ciba

## WHY DOES GOD ALLOW IT?

Chemical Factory, etc. We get along famously, our fellowship is based on very little, but it suffices for a conversation in the train. We have something in common. Thus, the first principle of fellowship is clear; it is based on something in common. Where there is nothing in common, there is no fellowship.

In the course of the conversation it becomes clear that my acquaintance is a scientist and studied the same branch of Natural Sciences as I myself. This fact broadens out our conversation considerably. We have more in common, and we find that the basis of our fellowship is certainly broadened thereby. It does not need many minutes to find that my acquaintance read at the same university as I did. Result, more in common, and an even broader basis of fellowship. He knew some of the professors I know, and we talked about them.

But in all this I noticed that he is not quite fluent in the German language, which hinders his freedom of conversation a little. I inquire of what nationality he is, and it is as I suspected: he is British. Immediately we start to speak in the English language, which widens out still more the basis of our conversation. Things in common have increased very much more now, and we are feeling almost like old friends. Our fellowship is indeed much broader; we have so many more things in common.

But now things take a different turn. I notice in his pocket a little black book, and confirm that he has a very friendly gleam in his eye. I make some inquiries about the Bible in his pocket and find that he is a keen Christian man, a real follower of Jesus Christ as personal Lord and Saviour. This gives indeed a decidedly different turn to our conversation. We can converse

of the things of God, of the things of the Spirit. We notice that our fellowship is going deeper than merely the intellect, we are going into the things of the soul and its relationship to God. Our fellowship is not merely broadened by this turn, but also really deepened. We find that our fellowship is not merely based on intellect, but that we are of one spirit in Christ, and therefore *brothers* in Him. Now we really are like old friends who have known one another for years.

Thus we can sum up the question of the meaning of fellowship very easily. Fellowship is simply based on things we have in common. If these things are many, but not very deep, our fellowship will be broad. If our appreciation of the deeper things of the Spirit is held in common, then the fellowship will become deep in just the measure of our common appreciation of them. So fellowship is perhaps the exchange of thought, feeling, appreciation—and also, perhaps, even of material things. The more this exchange takes place, the deeper the fellowship. If the exchange is on a superficial level, the fellowship will be superficial; if it is on an intellectual level, the fellowship will be intellectual, and if it is on a spiritual level, it will be spiritual. It takes two or more to effect this exchange.

Let us now examine in the light of the above one of the more important aspects of fellowship—that of the fellowship of the Christian with the Lord. After that we will look at the basis of fellowship between Christians among ourselves.

### 1. *Fellowship with the Lord.*

How is it that we experience such little fellowship with God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ? For all

earnest people realise they have too little fellowship and are anxious to increase it. On the basis of what we have discussed, it is fairly easy to explain this lack. The Scripture teaches us that "our *fellowship* is with the Father, and with His Son, Jesus Christ" (I John 1:3), and we "were called unto the *fellowship* of His Son, Jesus Christ" (I Corinthians 1:9). So that fellowship with God the Father and the Son should be the very basis of our Christian experience. It is the basis of our calling.

Shall we look at this problem point for point?

(a) My fellowship with the Lord personally began when I confessed to Him my sin at my conversion. Thus my sin was the first matter which I had in common with Him. He bore my sins for me, though I had committed them. Thus we had this matter in common, and it was thus the beginning of our fellowship.

But I soon learned something very important. If I confessed to Him my sins only in part, thinking that they were either not serious enough or that they could be excused somehow or another, I noticed that our fellowship began to suffer. "All my sins" offered a much broader basis for things in common than only the half of them. Many Christian people enjoy too little fellowship with the Lord because they do not open up all the secrets of their heart to Him in respect of sin and guilt. To hide things from Him definitely reduces things in common, and therefore reduces the very basis of our calling—our fellowship with Him.

(b) When a young man and a young woman are really in love and want to go through life together, their fellowship is sealed and expressed by marriage. Henceforth they live in a common house, they bear a



common name, their life is, in fact, in common in every way, and their aims and intentions are common too. Their outwardly living lives in common is merely a natural expression of the inward unity of their hearts. Thus the *fellowship* of marriage is intended to be the *deepest and broadest* because it is based on the *deepest and broadest things in common*. If, however, a husband after a few years sets out to impress other women and she other men, things in common between themselves get less as things in common between each partner and outside personalities increase. Thus fellowship is destroyed.

If we want to have the deepest fellowship with the Lord we must have in practise and in every detail of our life *all* things in common with Him. Do we bear, for example, openly and publicly Christ's name, expressing thus our common life with Him? Does all my love, all my money, do all my wishes and hopes really coincide with His? Every bit of unfaithfulness in respect of money, for example, reduces the things in common with Him, and therefore reduces practical fellowship. Is my business His?

(c) We all know the schoolgirls between the ages of twelve and fifteen years who continually whisper and giggle as they share their secrets with one another. The sharing of secrets forms quite an important function in fellowship. One cannot tell everyone all one's secrets. But the sharing of really secret matters is the seal of real fellowship. It is for this reason that God has shared with us His deepest secrets, hidden from the foundation of the world from all other eyes: "Having made known unto us the secret (mystery) of His will, according to his good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself:

that in the dispensation of the fulness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in Him" (Ephesians 1:9-10).

God has been willing to share with His children this great secret. He intends to install Christ as King and Emperor of the whole cosmos. And, He adds, we have obtained a part with Christ in this mighty kingdom. This is no unimportant secret. It concerns the very ultimate future history of heaven and earth and, of course, our own participation in it. We share this secret with the Father, and it is intended to increase the things in common between us.

(d) When I first met my acquaintance in the train we found with difficulty a subject for conversation, and until we started to converse, there was not much fellowship between us. When we first got into the same compartment neither of us imagined how much fine fellowship would later ensue. If neither of us had opened our mouths, and if the exchange of thought had not somehow started, we should both have reached Basel without having experienced any fellowship. Without exchange, be it of thoughts or goods, there is no fellowship to be had.

Exactly the same situation obtains with respect to our fellowship with the Lord. If we have not the time, or perhaps not the courage, to start the exchange with Him, we risk the danger of reaching our destination at the end of our life without having ever experienced real fellowship with Him. It is as if an Unknown One sits opposite us all the days of our life, waiting for us to respond to his efforts to enter into exchange with us. If, however, our work, the newspaper, radio or

television or any other things so occupy us that we have no time for our *vis-à-vis*, then the latter will never be able to enrich the journey with his fellowship as he wishes. For Jesus Christ, the *vis-à-vis*, has been through life the very hard way, and has experienced in principle all the situations we are likely to meet ourselves, which fact gives Him and us a world of things in common. He was tempted in like manner as we, by suffering He learned obedience, even though He was the Son of God. What a wealth of things in common as a basis for fellowship! And the Lord Jesus has not forgotten that He was once a man—indeed, He still is man, with all man's experience, for He is *the same* yesterday, today and forever. To experience all this we must, however, take time for exchange with Him. For this reason, the reading of the Bible, prayer, almsgiving, witnessing and service are absolutely indispensable.

(e) Hopes held in common bring with them a fine fellowship. The question is: Do we really have the same hopes as our Saviour? "Jesus . . . sat down on the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting (hoping) till His enemies be made His footstool" (Hebrews 10:12, 13). Is this hope the guiding principle of our life? Are all our actions determined by the blessed hope of the Lord's return? If the same hope does not animate us as Him, our fellowship will be weakened correspondingly.

(f) If my *vis-à-vis* in the train had used the knowledge he gained from me, or if I had used the knowledge I gained of him, to slander one another (for who has no secret things in his heart he is glad other people know nothing about?), what would have happened to our fellowship? Knowledge misused can be very

dangerous. We abuse the things which are committed to us by the Lord if we do not use them in putting them into practise. This, too, ruins fellowship.

2. *Fellowship with one another.*

(a) “. . . That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us” (1 John 1:3). When we pass on to other Christians what we have heard and seen, the basis of fellowship obviously becomes broader. We share with one another our experience with God, so that which we have in common grows. Thus Christians who only go once a week to hear a sermon and never go to fellowship meetings, Bible readings and prayer meetings miss much of the true fellowship, of the true communion of the saints, which God has intended for them. Searching together in the Word of God gives a wonderful fellowship which only those who have experienced it know of. Praying together for common interests, for people we are mutually interested in, gives a similar fellowship about which non-Christians and, sad to say, many Christians know nothing.

(b) 2 Peter 3:3-5 reports to us that there will be mockers and scoffers in the last days who live in their own lusts but who are well orientated about the coming of the Lord. They know about His coming, but do not share the living hope of this coming themselves. How is it possible to know of His coming and yet not to be a partaker of the happy quickening hope? Our text gives us the answer, for it is specifically mentioned that the scoffers lived in their lusts—and scoffed. Sin of any sort kills the lively hope of His coming and kills also the fellowship of the saints which results from this

hope. Sin makes the whole Bible unreal—as any observant Christian will have noticed. If our hope of His coming is no longer real, let us ask ourselves if perhaps some hidden sin is responsible.

Knowledge, even biblical knowledge, together with sin, are the best producers of mockers and scoffers. A number of the world's most famous scoffers arose in this way. In their youth such people often received excellent biblical instruction, but preferred to reject the humble Jesus in favour of more robust philosophies—as they often suggest. Anyone who has read Hitler's *Mein Kampf* attentively will be astounded at the author's intimate knowledge of the Old and New Testaments—and also at his scoffing at and rejection of all the higher attributes recommended by the Bible as God's law. Stalin, Voltaire, Nietzsche and others illustrate the same principle.

(c) "If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another" (1 John 1:7). Thus, the condition for fellowship among Christians here given is that of walking in the light. And as Jesus said that He was the light of the world, obviously walking in Jesus is the pre-condition for fellowship. To go one step further, the psalmist teaches us that God's Word is the lamp for our feet and the light on our way (Psalm 119:105), so that a walk according to the Word of God, putting it into practice in daily life as Jesus did, is the basis of fellowship.

But our text teaches us something further. It does not say that we must mark time in the light, but that we must walk—that is, make progress—in the light. That is, our knowledge of the secret things of God and our practice of them must make progress. The Lord Jesus

has perhaps been able to teach us nothing new for years, because maybe we have not been able to bear the harder things He has to tell us (John 16:12). Thus we have been marking time in the light, which activity is never guaranteed to increase fellowship, either between the individual and his Saviour or in the local Church among the believers. Indeed, if we do not walk we cannot help going backwards in spiritual things.

Finally here is the last principle we want to touch: "And He that sent Me is with Me: the Father hath not left Me alone; for I do always those things which please Him" (John 8:29). The basis of fellowship between the Father and Son is given here. The Father did not leave Him alone (was always in perfect fellowship with Him), simply because it was Jesus' mode of life always to take care to do that which was well pleasing to the Father. Perhaps it is not superfluous to say that, when every action of ours is conditioned by the same attitude of mind, we shall always have perfect fellowship with our God too.

Let us be clear about one thing, for spiritual fellowship, being together with respect to space and distance is not necessary. If there is a quarrel between a man and his wife, one having sinned against the other, they can live together in the same house and experience the very opposite of fellowship. The only way of restoring the same is complete mutual forgiveness after looking into the problems from both sides with loving and forgiving hearts. This attitude is for fellowship even more important than being physically together. Please do not misunderstand me here. Being together physically in human relationships is, of course, of some importance. But it never ever cancels out the necessity for complete

## ON FELLOWSHIP

exchange of heart-thought in respect of the removal and putting away of sin which destroys fellowship.

And thus it is with our fellowship with the Lord. We must keep short accounts with Him with respect to sin. It must be repented of and put away immediately it is recognised as such, if our fellowship with Him is to grow as He intends it to. Thus we shall experience the fellowship with the Father and the Son, together with the true communion of the saints.









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