

From The Pulpit

by Rev. Donald M. Clark

IS GOD RESPONSIBLE FOR LIFE'S TRAGEDY AND PAIN?

Text: "But he knoweth the way that I take; when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold." Job. 23:10.

Each successive day that dawns on our world brings some fellow creature tragedy and heartbreaking sorrow. One generation after another asks the same questions. Why are these terrible things permitted to happen? Does God will them? Are they punishment for our sins? Do they not flatly contradict the Christian teaching that God is love? As we grapple with these profound issues, perhaps we may best begin by correcting some of the false notions that have persisted across the years in many discussions of the problems of suffering.



REV. D. M. CLARK

First: It is not true that tragedy and pain are meted out to mankind by specific acts of God. Moreover, it is cruel and false to say, for example, that God would take a child away from its parents because of jealousy or revenge. Such ideas contradict the noblest teachings of the Bible in both the Old and New Testaments and are poles removed from the revelation of God given to us by Jesus Christ.

Our Lord has taught us that not even a sparrow falls to the ground unnoticed of God and that his human children are of even more concern. Speaking of children, Jesus said: "It is not the will of your Father that one of these little ones should perish." If a child is killed by a drunken driver, it is blasphemous to suggest that God willed it.

Intelligent Christians will not succumb to the fallacy of fatalism or to a rock-ribbed predestination by believing that all calamities or misfortunes are due to the will of God.

Second: It is not true that all tragedy and pain is the results of sin and is God's way of punishing our misdoings. It is true, of course, that sin has brought much suffering to the world and always carries with it its own penalty. But any honest estimate of human life will readily admit that not only sinners but the righteous also suffer.

The Book of Job was written to refute the idea that righteousness guarantees prosperity and well-being.

By means of this religious drama depicting the life of Job, this Hebrew philosopher shows how a good man can face the sternest adversity and still maintain his integrity and his faith, even though he can find no reason in his character and conduct why disaster should have been visited upon him.

Jesus, too, faced these issues. The disciples reminded him how Pilate had mingled the blood of Galilean pilgrims with their sacrifice in the temple. In reply, Jesus asked them, "Were these men sinners above all others in Jerusalem?" And then in answer to his own question, he said, "I tell you, Nay." He gave a similar reply with respect to the eighteen men on whom the tower of Siloam fell.

So when someone says to you, "I wonder what wrong I have done that this evil (or this bereavement) should come upon me," tell them that they are reasoning on a sub-Christian level; that an informed Christian would never talk that way; that God would not be guilty of putting punishment on any such mechanical level.

Yet in almost any group of people who discuss this matter, you will find those who think that God is unfair because they know of wicked people who are enjoying material prosperity. Our understanding of Christianity has reached a low ebb if we equate worldly prosperity with a life inspired by the spirit and teaching of Christ. Jesus would have none of this, and he emphasizes the divine impartiality in the natural order by reminding us that God "makes his

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DEADline for church news and photographs is Friday noon preceding the next Thursday publication date at the Rev. Mr. Clark's home, 1676 N. 'E' St., telephone 642-1560. All items submitted must be accompanied by the sender's name, address and telephone number.

BAPTIST

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Operation Independence Not Affected by Revision

IN ORDER TO CONFORM with federal statute, the Clark County agency for promoting economic opportunities, formerly known as the "Operation Independence Advisory Council and Planning Board" has been renamed "Operation Opportunities for Clark County."

The change will not affect the West Las Vegas subsidiary, which will continue to be known as "Operation Independence" with its same structure, advisory council and planning board.

The new name for the county-wide agency was submitted to the County Commission for approval yesterday.

Under the new set-up, projects proposed by such organizations as "Operation Independence" will not be subject to long delays in Washington through various reviews required by the Economic Opportunities Act.

Instead, the county-wide planning board will serve as a fiscal agent and screening body with the power to make contracts with the Federal government for monies needed to carry on operations by such subsidiaries as "Operation Independence".

sun to shine on the evil and the good, and sends rain upon the just and the unjust.

But somebody asks, "How shall we explain the existence of tragedy and recurrent disaster in the world?" The truest answer, it seems to me, would point out the possibility that misfortune and other evils often stem from the source of mankind's greatest advances and the deepest joys of the human race. There are a number of factors in the universe from which come all the tragedies that afflict mankind. We shall have time to deal with only two:

The existence of fixed, dependable, and predictable principles and laws that govern the natural order.

A fixed system of natural law always involves certain perils, but a dangerous world is preferable to a stagnated, an irresponsible, or a dead one.

The deepest joys that man can know in his brief existence come from such kinship as family ties, friendships, the love of a man for a maid, loyalty to home and country. But all these would be impossible if it were not for the interdependence of the human race.

Yet how many of us, if we were given the power, would want to build a world in which there would be neither abiding natural law nor human interdependence? Instead there would be chaos and each human life would be a law unto itself with no more relationship one to another than a handful of marbles. Yes, our calamities emerge from the same factors that provide our advantages and our joys.

When everything has been said that can be said on this problem of suffering, there are left many unanswered questions. Jesus made no attempt to resolve the mystery of pain in the world, but he gave us the means of triumphing over it. "In the world," he said to his followers, "ye shall have tribulation" (in other words, you shall be beaten with the flail of adversity), "but be of good cheer, for I have overcome the world."

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Sunday Mass--11 a.m. and 5 p.m.
Week Day Mass--7:30 p.m. each evening
Confession--Saturday 4 and 7:30 p.m.

CHURCH of GOD in CHRIST

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(All Churches of God in Christ)

Tuesday 8 pm - - - - - Bible Band
Wednesday 8 pm - - - - - *Young People
Friday 8 pm - - - - - *Consecration
Sunday 10 am - - - - - Sunday School
Sunday 12 m - - - - - Morning Service
Sunday 6:30 pm - - - - - YPW
Sunday 8 pm - - - - - Evening Worship

*Progressive - - - - - Inspirational

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