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Editorial

TENANTS IN RESIDENCE

In a recent public address President Charles Cuthbert Hall, of Union Theological Seminary, employed the expressive phrases "tenants in residence," "tenants in trust," to describe the relation of each succeeding generation on the one side to those who preceded it and on the other to those who are to follow it. The words are aptly expressive of a truth of great importance. Our present possessions, material and spiritual, are almost wholly an inheritance from preceding generations. We are born into a civilization, a government, a literature, an art, a religion that we did not produce, but which are the slowly created product of many centuries. They are ours to use for the brief space of a lifetime, not as owners but as tenants, and at the end of our tenancy not to surrender it, after the fashion of some conscienceless tenants of other people's property, wasted and diminished, but to pass it on to the succeeding generation enhanced in value.

The development of a sense of obligation to those who are to follow us, based on the fact of our receiving something not from them but from those who passed this way before us, is a fairly accurate criterion of the state of civilization that we have reached. To take what has come down to us from the past, consume it and waste it regardless of the welfare of unborn generations is the mark of a savage or of a decadent race. To live for those whom we have not seen, and cannot see; to be willing to sacrifice our own comfort and ease, even life itself, that men coming after us may stand on a higher plane than we ourselves have occupied, may have clearer vision of truth and larger outlook on life—this is a moral achievement of a high order.

To some it may seem unreasonable, quixotic. Yet it is precisely such living as this that most ennobles life, that removes it farthest from that self-centered individualism which is akin to savagery.

A SYMPOSIUM ON THE PROBLEM OF NATURAL EVILS

REV. HENRY E. JACKSON
Upper Montclair, N. J.

“We are not born,” said Goethe, “to solve the problems of the world, but to find out where the problem begins, and then to keep within the limits of what we can grasp.” In this luminous remark, Goethe shows his insight when he recognizes the fact that there are some problems of life which we cannot solve, but which at the same time demand that we shall assume some working attitude toward them. This twofold fact applies with special force to what is known as natural or physical evil, not the evil that may be done, that is moral, but the evil that may be suffered, evil that is due to the destructive forces of nature for which man cannot see his responsibility, such as the earthquake at Lisbon, “which raised more painful doubts as to the wisdom and goodness of God than all the speculative criticism of the eighteenth century.” While such evil cannot be explained, it is a sad and tragic fact that refuses to be ignored.

The truth of Goethe's statement was forced on the attention of a group of men, of which the writer was privileged to be a member, who had taken up a candid study of the Bible. We approached the study with a definite aim; we put the Bible upon the witness stand in court, and asked two questions: first, What is its testimony as to the facts of human life? second, Is its testimony true, that is, can it be accepted as each man's own personal attitude?

We soon found that the Bible was a prejudiced witness. It was not a mere chronicler or negative observer of the facts of life. It colors its reports of the facts with its own personal conviction and maintains a decided attitude toward them. We did not quarrel with it for this reason, but rather liked it the more, because some positive help or explanation of the facts of life was the very thing we were seeking. If the Bible is to be of any value to men, it must make some positive contribution to their problems. We found that this is what the Bible does. When we came to the Bible's treatment of the Flood, the whole problem of natural evil was raised. The real question, therefore,

which here challenged our attention was whether the Bible's attitude could be accepted as our practical working theory toward all such evils. It was with a desire for help in answering this question that the following letter was sent to a few of the leading living students of the Bible. It is hoped that the answers received will be as helpful to others as they were to us.

THE QUESTION

My Bible class raises this question: Is it true that the Flood, as the writer of Genesis says, was a punishment for sin? How can such catastrophes be a punishment for sin when they involve the suffering of the innocent? (Even in the Flood, innocent children must have died.) Is the attitude of the Old Testament on such natural evils as the Flood, the destruction of Sodom, and the plague of locusts in Joel, contradicted by Christ's attitude on the incident of the tower of Siloam? If so, is not the Old Testament in part destroyed as a real revelation from God?

What logical connection can there be between these catastrophes in nature and man's sin? Does not the Bible look on such calamities as used by God for moral ends? Ought we not, then, to look on the Lisbon earthquake and the cataclysm at Martinique in the same light? Is there not a radical difference between the modern and biblical attitude toward such catastrophes?

Does not the question involve the whole question of God's relation to his world? Is it not, therefore, of the greatest importance to one's religious life that he search for at least a tentative working attitude toward it?

Your suggestions would be of great service to me, and I would greatly appreciate them.

THE ANSWER OF DR. WARFIELD

DR. B. B. WARFIELD, professor of systematic theology in Princeton Seminary, writes: When the questioner in your Bible class sets "punishment for sin" and "punishment for moral ends" over against one another as mutually exclusive, he is guilty of a false antithesis. There is no place for an "either . . . or" here. Both may be, and indeed, both are always true. There never was a case of punishment "for sin" that was not also punishment for "moral ends," nor was there ever a case of punishment for "moral ends" which was not also punishment "for sin."

So when he sets our Lord's words, as to the falling of the tower of Siloam, over against the teaching of Genesis as to the Flood, as if a different doctrine of the meaning of calamities was implied in the two, he is again guilty of a false antithesis. Our Lord does not say that calamities are not proof of sin. He says that special calamities are not a proof of special sin. He does not say, "Think ye that the people on whom the tower fell are sinners? I tell ye nay!" He says, "Think ye that they are sinners *above others*? I tell ye nay, for except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish." This is to say clearly that no tower ever falls on any but

sinner. We are all sinners, and are all alike, therefore, liable to be caught by falling towers, and we must not argue that we are not sinners because no tower has *as yet* fallen on us. It certainly will fall on us if we do not repent and so we shall be in the same case with those on whom it fell in destiny, as we are in the same case with them in desert.

You see our Lord argues on the same assumption as the Old Testament, viz., that all calamity is the proof of sin and all sin will bring calamity. Sin and calamity are bound together with unbreakable bonds; where the one is, the other is. But because we are all alike sinners, and all alike, therefore, bound to calamity as our natural portion, he warns us against judging of *relative* sinfulness by relative calamity. The distribution of the calamity suitable to all is in the hands of God, and it is employed by him for his own ends. Our Lord's warning is, therefore, only another way of saying, "Judge not by feeble sense."

On the other hand, your questioner in the Bible class argues apparently on the assumption that there is no necessary relation between sin and calamity. He seems to suppose that calamity can fall when there is no sin. In other words he has forgotten (as many forget nowadays) the Fall. Given the Fall, and there is a place for the use of calamity in the moral government of the world. God may then visit or withhold the suffering which is due to all, as best suits his ends, in the sovereign working of his plan, as all things are made by him to move onward toward that far-off divine event.

If there had been no Fall, however, there would be no such use made of calamity as if it could be employed merely as an educative measure. For of one thing we may be certain; God does not smite when smiting were unjust. The basis of the moral uses of calamity is laid, then, in the retributive need of calamity. Where calamity is not, in the first instance, punishment for sin, it can never be introduced as a medium for the education of the race. Your questioner has doubtless been reading the discussion of the general question of the relation of calamities to God's government of the world which appeared in the early numbers of the *Hibbert Journal*. Perhaps he has found it difficult to separate the fine remarks which are scattered through that discussion from the general atmosphere of rationalism, in which the whole discussion lives and moves and has its being, with rationalism's ineradicable neglect of sin. Of course the whole question of God's relation to his world is involved. But the question cannot be solved apart from the biblical and Christian view of the world. "The whole world," says John, "lieth in wickedness," and with that key we unlock, and with it only, can we unlock all the puzzles of God's relation to his world. It is his world because he made it. It is the devil's world because he marred it. It is to be God's world again because he is remaking it, and one of the instrumentalities he employs in remaking it is just calamities.

What are we to say then of the earthquake at Lisbon, of the cataclysm at Martinique, of the Flood itself? This first, that they *never* would have happened in God's world at all, had sin not intruded into it, and required scourging. This next, that they do not happen accidentally, and inadvertently, or without purpose

on God's part, and would not happen as they do happen unless God were remaking his world. This finally, that they must be conceived, therefore, both as punishment for human sin and as means to the end of the recovery of the race to God and to good.

THE ANSWER OF PROFESSOR ROYCE

DR. JOSIAH ROYCE, professor of the history of philosophy in Harvard University, writes: A question such as you ask in your letter of March 2, cannot be briefly and at the same time adequately answered. I have several times discussed at length the problem of evil, and of its place in a moral order: (1) In the concluding chapter of my *Religious Aspect of Philosophy* (Boston, 1885); (2) In the concluding lecture of my *Spirit of Modern Philosophy*; (3) In an essay entitled "The Problem of Job," published in my book of essays entitled *Studies of Good and Evil* (New York, 1898); (4) In the last lecture but one of the second series of my Gifford lectures on *The World and the Individual* (New York, 1901), entitled "The Struggle with Evil." It is a pity to answer your inquiry with mere references, but if you want my views as to your general problems, I have to point out where I have had time to tell my story sufficiently to make it hang together.

As to the special problem of calamities, I can only say that the view which looks upon them as public punishments divinely sent for the sins of the people belongs to the childhood of religion, and is, to my mind, wholly unworthy of any higher view of the divine nature. Any method of punishment more stupid or ineffective than the Lisbon earthquake, or than the Martinique catastrophe, could hardly be devised, if that were the divine intent. The Old Testament writers had frequently got beyond that point in their interpretation of divine things. Witness the story of Jonah's conversation concerning the proposed destruction of Nineveh. That the other view persisted and still troubles a modern clergyman is only an example of how hard it is to get rid of a portentous tradition, if only it has a serious seeming. As to the story of the Flood, it is itself a childhood tradition; and I cannot see why we should view it as other than an interesting document of the early history of religion, to be judged historically with respect, of course, as a stage on the way to something wiser, but not for a moment to be taken as a serious guide either as to the early events of the history of mankind, or as a teaching that has to weigh in our own present judgment of religious problems.

Two things there are that suggest to us where the true solution of such problems as that about the occurrence of great calamities lies: (1) The unity of the world, the divine immanence, the solidarity of the spiritual life of the universe, make more intelligible to us the possibility and meaning of *vicarious suffering*, whereby what is suffered by one may be and is a gain to others in ways which we may only dimly see, but which we may conceive as of infinitely complex significance; (2) The fact that *triumph through suffering*, conquest over ills through the endurance of them, spiritual dignity that implies endurance, are things known to us as factors in higher spiritual life, is a fact that shows how, without suffering, the highest good cannot be won, even by the God whose world this is.

These two things are well known to the Christian consciousness. They form central ideas in the higher religious thought of the church. They are susceptible of a fuller philosophical exposition and defense than I here have time to give. They do away with the thought of suffering as a mere penalty. They dignify it as an aspect of spiritual experience. In connection with the thought that the life now seen is but a fragment of an infinite life, in which we all share, they enable us to conceive that what are, to us, the vastest calamities, are but fragments of an eternal life, whose total experience is not of failure but of victory, *over suffering and through suffering.*

So to view suffering is, I take it, the deeper spiritual sense of the doctrine of the incarnation and of the atonement. That, in his own way, St. Paul, I think, more or less apprehended; although he so expressed himself as to lead to a grosser interpretation in later theology. The essence of Christianity, on this side, is, I take it, the thought that God suffers, and, suffering, is thereby the more, the eternally triumphant God, whom hell itself cannot contain or conquer; and loving us, he invites us to share his triumph. In the glory of that triumph, where is the sting of death? Where is the might of evil that can resist the power of the spirit? Evil, however, must be known in order to be conquered. Hence evil is. That, I take it, is the gist of the matter. *What* evils in particular there may be, nobody can undertake to predict. But whatever there is, God is in and through all.

THE ANSWER OF DR. THOMPSON

DR. ROBERT ELLIS THOMPSON, president of the Boys' High School, Philadelphia, says: A few principles I may state: 1. The statements of our Lord about "the hardness of your hearts" (i. e., your intellectual limitations, the heart always standing for the *intellect* in the Bible) plainly intimates that the revelation of God in the Bible is gradual, and that much in the earlier stages needs to be rendered into the language of the fuller disclosure of the later time.

2. The whole matter of the disasters which befall human life is matter for faith in God, and never can be the object of adequate knowledge and explanation. Job felt that when he said, "Though he slay me, yet will I *trust* in him."

3. The death of innocent persons in a general disaster like the Deluge is not a penalty, and possibly involves no more suffering than attends death naturally, while it may be a release from worse things than physical death, the entering upon a state of great happiness.

4. In the earlier stages of the divine administration of human history, when the agencies of recovery and restoration had not been brought to the efficiency which we now see, the only possible way of dealing with some races and peoples may have been to transfer them to another world, where they would cease to propagate a degenerate sort of mankind, and leave the ground clear for a better stock of people. So the peoples of Canaan, and possibly the antediluvians. Now it is different.

5. The general correspondence of physical and moral evil is taught in Genesis; specific correspondence is denied in the Book of Job. Both seem to me right.

Our Lord asserts the principle of Job in his remark upon those on whom the tower fell in Siloam.

6. There is a pre-established harmony between the physical and the moral happenings of the world, which has been foreseen and provided. The wind which divided the waters of the Red Sea came by natural causes, when the Israelites were to pass over; and ceased by natural causes when they were over. The Deluge was the point in the world's physical history at which it ceased to be in the condition of Saturn, through the descent of its ring upon the earth's surface. It was pre-established that this should occur in a period when the moral condition of the race made the elimination of the majority of mankind a distinct gain for the world's future. See Vail's *The Earth's Annular System*.

The whole subject is very inadequately handled in books, but I have got most light out of Maurice's *Theological Essays* and E. Griffith-Jones's *The Ascent through Christ*. Both are worth your having on other accounts.

I know this is a very inadequate answer to your letter, but it is best that you should think out for yourself the solution of most of your problems. One thing should always be kept in mind in the study of the question, and that is the faith of the writer of Ps. 46, that the disasters of the world do not explain God to us, that we believe in him not through them but in spite of them.

THE ANSWER OF DR. SPEER

ROBERT E. SPEER, secretary of the Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian church: I wonder if you have ever read Bushnell's *Moral Uses of Dark Things*. It seems to me that that would throw some light on the principles involved in the problem considered by your men's Bible class.

For my part, I have always got help from looking at the matter in this way. Let us eliminate all thought about God and all attempt at explaining history. What were the facts? What are the facts of life today? Now when we have got clearly before us what the facts have been and what the facts of the present are, let us ask, what is the best explanation of these facts? Are they explicable at all on the basis of an atheistic interpretation of the universe? Are not the difficulties which such an interpretation creates greater even than the difficulties which it attempts to remove? Let us admit on the other hand that the theistic interpretation does not solve all the problems for us. It still gives us the most rational explanation that we can find, and it explains even the existence of some prominent difficulties, for it assumes a mind above our minds, all of whose operations we cannot now understand, but for the rationality of which the rationality of our own minds is pledge, so that we can be sure that what we do not understand now we may understand some day when we no longer see through a glass darkly but face to face.

It is true that it is hard to understand why there should be suffering in the world; why little children should be drowned in floods, and why innocent people should be hurt by the wicked. But I prefer to believe that there is an explanation of these things consistent with justice and love, and this preference I am sure is

more rational, because my whole reason declares for it, than the explanation which some other man offers which simply says, "there is no explanation at all."

As Dr. Babcock used to say, "The world is here, we are bound to interpret it; we must interpret it in terms of fate or we must interpret it in terms of fatherhood."

I see no difference between the Old Testament attitude and the Christian attitude, except that the former was primitive and the latter is mature. The Jews read their world in the terms of the rule of God; they often read into the deliberate activity of God what we look at as permitted by him for ends which are his own high and original ends, and into which some day we shall know how the permitted evil fitted beneficently.

No man gets away from mystery and difficulty by any explanation of the world, but those escape from the most difficulty, follow the most rational explanation, and are in accord with the mind of Christ with reference to these problems, who believe in God and interpret the world in the terms of his sovereignty, confused as it may be by the consequences of our own freedom.

THE ANSWER OF PRESIDENT WESTON

DR. HENRY G. WESTON, president of Crozer Theological Seminary: I am not sure that I can help you at all. I am not a theologian; I never saw a creed which I would say was my creed. I believe all the creed says but a thousand times more. Do I believe the Westminster definition of God? Yes; with all my heart. Is that your creed about God? Ten thousand times, No! The dearest, sweetest, most precious truth about God is not in that definition. I cannot frame my beliefs in any satisfactory way. I do not understand God. His ways to me are in the deep waters and his footsteps are not known. Clouds and darkness are round about him, but with my whole soul I believe that righteousness and judgment are still his habitation. I am surer that God is love than I am of my existence. But I cannot reconcile in words that great blessed truth with much that I see of God's doings. Nay, more, God has been wonderfully good to me; so good that I daily stand amazed at the way in which he has dealt with me as I review my life; yet there are mysteries in his dealings with me that I cannot comprehend. The two most earnest cries of my heart are that I may love God and that I may trust him.

So I am mentally disqualified for argument about God. I read the theologies, and try to be interested in them. I know their necessity to the intellect, but I cannot, when the hosts advance, keep up with the procession. So you must not expect much help from me. Nevertheless I will tell you what is in my mind.

I believe, and in this I differ with many of my brethren, that death is the wages of sin—that if there had been no sin, there had been no death. Death is predicated of the whole race and of the whole human being. This I understand to be asserted by Paul, Rom. 5:12-14. Of course, many infants die, although they have not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, voluntary, personal, wilful sin. So that to me there is no more difficulty in the case of a large number of infants perishing in catastrophies like the Flood, than to have them die as they

always do. Dying in company or dying singly does not affect the justice of the doom of death. I understand Christ in the case of the tower of Siloam to teach that the mode and time of death affirm nothing of the comparative guilt of the sufferers; that those before him were equally guilty and would suffer the same punishment. The Christian is not delivered from dying but from death. He is not completely saved until he has received a body like unto his Lord's glorious body. Christ comes the second time unto salvation; he will raise his saints and they shall appear with him in glory, and that glory includes the body.

Of course, I believe that if there had been no sin there would have been no earthquakes or cataclysms. Here again, I differ from my brethren. I speak of "this wretched weather," and they rebuke me. But I have Christ's authority. One of the miracles of salvation following the Sermon on the Mount was the stilling of the tempest. Christ "rebuked" the winds and the sea, and this is the same word which is used with evil spirits; look at Matt. 17:18; Mark 1:25, 4:39, 9:25; Luke 4:39-41.

I doubt whether this will be of any service to you, but it shows my good intention. Try to get your Bible class to have in the center of their hearts the first four words of the Apostles' Creed: "I believe in God." The longer I live I am more and more certain that love and faith are the solvent of all difficulties.

May God guide us both and those whom we instruct into the knowledge and love of him.

If we pass over the points of difference represented in these letters and seek the elements on which they agree, we shall discover their chief value. It is worthy of note that there are two factors of the problem on which all the letters are agreed. The one is, that the problem of evil is manifestly too difficult for solution. Mere speculation is unequal to it and the intellect cannot resolve it. It is worth much to have faced the facts fairly and to have discovered our inability to explain them. A man's discovered ignorance should keep him from being dogmatic and should prevent him from stating the question as Coulson Kernahan does, when, in one of his little books, he makes the whole human race come together and utter a challenge against God. A man's attitude should be one rather of humility and of a reverent, trusting agnosticism. If it is, he will find that the mystery still unsolved has great value for him in the formation of moral character. The wise man knows how to be ignorant.

The second factor, on which all the letters agree is, that in some way God's hand is in all natural evils. This is the Bible's contribution to the solution of a problem, *which it did not create, but which it*

seeks to help men solve. It refuses to look at any calamity apart from a God of love. Jesus did not solve the problem of evil, he just brought God into it. This is the Bible's attitude, and it urges it on all men as their best working theory, not as an explanation to the intellect, but as a rational act of faith, to be used just as hypotheses are used in science and which are to be proved progressively by every fresh establishment of the law of love in human experience. If I can believe that a God of love has something to do with my suffering, then, and then only, I can bear it in patience.

It is the deliberate assumption of such an attitude that is the key to the problem for each man. It will not change the facts as they are, but it will change them as far as he is concerned. Henry Morley reminds us that Voltaire, when in witty mockery he wrote *Candide*, was a rich man owning two estates. Johnson, when he wrote *Rasselas*, in humble faith, was very poor. His old mother had just died, and that he might have money to pay the little debts she left and bury her, he wrote *Rasselas* in the evenings and nights of a single week. It was not the facts, but the personal attitude, that made the difference between Voltaire and Johnson.

The chief and abiding impression, left on our minds by a careful reading of the letters, was, that for a man to refuse deliberately to interpret natural evils in terms of fate and choose to interpret them in terms of fatherhood, as the Bible does, is the only key which will even partially unlock the mystery for each man. The use of this key will reproduce for any man the experience of Robertson of Brighton, who said:

The whole mystery of pain has been unraveling itself to my *heart* gradually, and now that I have got a clue, the worst of that Cretan labyrinth turns out to be a harmonious and beautiful arrangement so that the paths which are still unexplored I can now believe are part of the same plan. I know that the heart, like the wound, must bleed till the wound has cleansed itself by its own blood.