



CHIP PETERSON—SYGMA

**A shaky takeoff, an aborted flight and crash—all in a matter of seconds**

ogy. These modern theologians say that the question of why God allows these tragedies, or why God is not apparently powerful enough to stop them, has vexed religious counselors for centuries. And well it may. Because people simply do not understand that question!

If God is all good, if God is love, he wouldn't want humanity to suffer, would he? And if God is all powerful, as the Bible says he is, why doesn't he stop suffering? Why doesn't he prevent it?

The credibility of God is now at stake, say the theologians. The world, they contend, has grown weary of religious spokesmen trying to defend God and explain why God allows these things—and at the same time saying that God is all love, God is all good, God is all powerful and he could stop it, yet he doesn't. So modern theologians now have come up with this new theology called process theology in an attempt to explain this apparent paradox.

Recall for a moment that at the turn of the century theologians were coming up with a then-new theology. They were turning to what is called modernism. In other words, they were denying any deity to Jesus Christ. He was not divine. He had not existed before his human birth. He was only human. And they denied his miracles.

And now a new generation of religious thinkers is coming to the new idea called process theology. God, they say, is entirely loving, but is lacking in power.

They say nothing of the real purpose of life. They say nothing about the restoration of the kingdom of God, the only gospel that Jesus Christ preached.

**The Origin and Purpose of Life**

But what is the real trouble with this question? What is the reason that God has not stopped all this violence, all this human suffering?

In all the religions of this world—the many different religions we call non-Christian, and even the religion of Christianity—not one religion knows who and what God is. What is God? Is he a

# WHY MUST MAN SUFFER ?

by Herbert W. Armstrong

Theologians now say God lacks the power to prevent suffering!

**M**AJOR airline crash. Devastating hurricanes. Potential nuclear mass destruction of whole cities. Does God lack the power to prevent their occurrence?

What about all of these evils—the violence, the human suffering that humanity has been going through for nearly 6,000 years?

**Process Theology**

Now comes a new school of religious thought called process theol-

trinity? Is God one person? They just don't understand.

And none, either, understands God's purpose. Does God have a purpose he is working out? Winston Churchill said before the United States Congress during World War II that there is a purpose being worked out here below. He implied God, a higher power above, is working out that purpose.

Not one religion on earth fully knows what and why man is. Why are we here? What is the purpose, if any?

What does God say about all of this? Notice what God says in Isaiah chapter 40, beginning with verse 17:

"All nations before him are as nothing; and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity. To whom then will ye liken God? or what likeness will ye compare unto him? . . . It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers [that is to God]; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in:

" . . . To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One. Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number: he calleth them all by names by the greatness of his might [there it speaks of God's might, his power], for that he is strong in power; not one faileth" (verses 17, 22, 25-26).

The earth turns on its axis. The different seasons regularly come. It is the power of God that is causing all of that. And that is mighty power. Yes, God has all power.

### How It All Began

What is the real origin of God? What is the origin of all this visible universe? It is not evolution. That can be absolutely disproved. But in the Bible we read, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1).

In the beginning was one great personage called the Word, the Spokesman. And the Word was with another personage, God. And the Word was God. How could that be? You might say in a certain res-

idence was John, and John was with Smith, and John was a Smith. But John isn't the same man as Smith. He's a different person. John could have been Smith's son. They could have been of the same family. That's precisely what this verse means.

There was the Word with God. "The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him . . ." (John 1:2-3).

In Ephesians 3:9 we read about "God, who created all things by Jesus Christ." The Word, in other words, became Jesus Christ. And God created all things by Jesus Christ. Another scripture says, "For he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast" (Ps. 33:9). The power that emanated from him and from God the Father—the power of the Holy Spirit—leaped forth and did the work. All things were created in that manner.

Now, further, about God. What is God? In John 4:24 (RSV) we read that "God is spirit." Man is not spirit. Man is flesh. Man is composed of matter. But God is not composed of matter; God is spirit. Now spirit is something you cannot see; spirit is something that has no weight. Matter is something that occupies space and has weight. Spirit is different.

Turn now to the book of Genesis: "In the beginning God . . ." (Gen. 1:1). The word for God there is *Elohim*, a plural form indicating more than one person—but with a singular verb indicating one God. God, then, is composed of more than one person.

The Word was God, and the Word was with God, and so God was composed of these two beings. When Jesus was born he was begotten of God as his Father. God then became his Father and Jesus then became the Son. And so there is the Father and the Son. They compose God. God is the family name.

The fact that God is a family is very significant. That begins to explain the whole question.

Turn now to Genesis 1:26: ". . . Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. . . ." In verses 21 through 25 we read God had made sea creatures and land animals each after its own kind. Each kind repro-

duces after its own kind and never generates a totally new kind.

### After the God Kind

God formed man after the God kind, not after an animal kind. God is reproducing himself! Now when you understand *that*, you begin to understand why God is allowing all the suffering on the earth today.

Notice, now, Genesis 2:7: "And the Lord God [Lord there is the name of the one that became Christ] formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man [made of the dust of the ground] became a living soul."

The dust of the ground, then, became a soul. The dust of the ground is not spirit—the dust became a man. And that man is a soul. A soul came out of the ground. Man, then, is physical, mortal.

In other places in the Bible you find that there is a spirit *in* man that is altogether different. Man is flesh. Man is mortal. Man does not inherently have eternal life; he only has a temporary existence. He came out of the dust of the ground. Man's existence—what we call human life—is supplied by the breath of air. It is called the breath of life here in Genesis 2:7. Also, "the life of the flesh is in the blood," says Leviticus 17:11. The heart pumps blood through the body, and the blood has to be refueled by oxygen and by food and water out of the ground.

### Man Must Choose

The man that God created now had to make a choice.

Character is the ability of some separately created entity to come to a knowledge of right as from wrong, of truth as from error, of good as from evil. To choose the right, or the good, and to reject the evil—even though he might want to do the evil—to have the will to do the good, that is character.

God is the supreme, holy, righteous, perfect, spiritual character. And if he is reproducing himself, he must reproduce that character in man. Man must acquire that character.

How is that divine character going to get into something made out of the ground? God placed a

human spirit in the first man. That human spirit could have a relationship with God, who is spirit.

But God placed before that man two choices, symbolized by two trees in the garden of Eden. The one tree was the tree of life. How does God give that life? It comes through the Holy Spirit. The person that has the Spirit of God has life, and he that has not the Spirit of God does not have life. If the Spirit of Christ is in you, you are his (I John 5:11-12).

If the Spirit of God is not in you, you are "none of his" (Rom. 8:9, last part). And, verse 11, "But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken [make immortal] your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you."

God made us mortal, but he made us to become immortal. And God required that the man had to make a choice, because character had to be built in the man! Character is built through choice.

The other tree, the other choice before man, symbolized the way of man's taking to himself—deciding altogether by himself—the knowledge of good and evil. How do we come to know the truth of God? In I Corinthians 2:9 we read, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart [mind] of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him"—in other words, spiritual knowledge.

God reveals these things to us only by his Spirit. The Spirit of God reveals God's knowledge—spiritual knowledge and spiritual character. But man decided to take the basis of that kind of character to himself, to decide right from wrong, truth from error, by himself.

So, in punishment, God at that time closed up the tree of life. In other words, he shut up the Holy Spirit from man.

God had set out a 7,000-year plan and purpose in which to develop the godlike character in man, made from the dust of the ground. God's purpose is to make us immortal like God, until we become God as he is God. That has got to come through human experience, but it has to

come from God, with our consent, our desire, our decision and our will.

#### What God Is Like

I John 3:1-2 says, "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us [here is the fact that God loves us], that we should be called the sons of God [ultimately to be born of God, though now begotten of God; for God is reproducing himself, and we're called the sons of God]: . . . now [even right now] are we the sons of God [but only begotten, not yet born], and it doth not yet appear what we shall be [in other words, what we shall be one can't see yet]: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."

How is he? In the first chapter of Revelation, and other places in the Bible, you'll find that his face is as the very sun in full power and strength. It's so bright it would put your eyes out even if you look with smoked glass. His eyes are like flames of fire.

God is spirit. And if you could see spirit that is what you would see. And that is what we will be when God comes. When he appears we'll be like him. This is referring to the Second Coming of Christ, which is now imminent for our very generation.

The purpose of God is character building. That is why he made man of matter. We could be *molded* spiritually, in a body of earthly clay, into divine character. We read in Isaiah 64:8, "But now, O Lord, thou art our father; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand."

Even Job asked, "If a man die, shall he live again? all the days of my appointed time will I wait [meaning in the grave], till my change come. Thou [God] shalt call, and I will answer thee: thou wilt have a desire to the work of thine hands" (Job 14:14-15).

Job knew he was the work of God's hands. We all are the clay. God is the potter. A potter molds and fashions clay into the form and shape he wants. Now God will—if we put ourselves in his hands, if we surrender to him, and to his will—take us and mold and shape us into the godlike character of love.

God is love. God will put his divine love in us, a love with which we were not born. It is a gift of God through his Holy Spirit.

Notice Isaiah 45:9, "Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker! . . . Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What makest thou? . . ."

What about the theologians reasoning that today's divided Christianity is God's religion, that this is God's world, and God isn't powerful enough to stop all of evil?

God is allowing man to make his own decisions. And if man makes the wrong decision, God has said whatever we sow we shall reap. God has told his people that ever since the beginning. He told Adam that. He told ancient Israel that. And Jesus Christ told us that. If we sin we will have to reap the consequences. God allows it. He allows suffering and the pain of sin for a good purpose.

God has given man a mind to think with. He gives man revealed knowledge in the Bible. Man can take that knowledge and learn to go God's way. That is necessary for the development of character so we can become like God, so we can become the very children of God, so we can be born the children of God. But man has, throughout history, refused to go that way—except for a very few whom God has called and to whom he has revealed his truth by his Holy Spirit.

In Matthew 24:4-5 Jesus said, "Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name [Jesus said], saying, [that] I am [the] Christ; and shall deceive many."

How can they do that? Jesus said in Matthew 15:9, "But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." They make the commandments of God of no effect by their tradition (verse 3).

The commandments of God are the right way to live; they reveal God's way of life. Human beings have not kept the commandments of God. They have said, and many preachers are saying today, that the commandments of God are done away.

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## **SUFFER**

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The commandments of God are the way of love, of love to God and love to neighbor. The first four of the Ten Commandments tell you how to love God, the last six how to love your neighbor. That is the way God lives and the way Christ lived while on earth.

But in Jeremiah 50:6 God says that the shepherds, the ministers of this world, lead his people astray and deceive them. That is exactly what has happened. The

world has been deceived, and the deceived theologians can't seem to understand why God allows all this suffering from disobedience till we learn our ways are wrong.

God allows it to teach us lessons. God allows it because we ourselves have brought it on ourselves, and because we have failed to develop the kind of character needed to become his children, to be glorified, to be given the gift of eternal life so as to live in happiness and peace and joy. There's no other way for peace.

Man has brought all this on himself, in defiance of God! Man has been shaking his fist at God, telling God he won't obey God and going his own way, the way that has seemed right to a man. It's all a matter of cause and effect. It's the way we have lived that has brought all these troubles on us, not God.

But God will show man whether he has power. God will finally deliver man from the evils of today's civilization by his divine powers and establish his kingdom of peace over all the earth. □