



ZWTF

Zapping You Whenever Thoughts Flow

Volume 8, Issue 8

The History of the Universe, Chapter 5.

God is love.



God is love, thank God. The reason we know God is love is that love exists. Love is the highest attainment of humanity. Even John Lennon figured that out when he composed, “All You Need is Love.” Interesting that the Beatles were far ahead of the Christian creeds. It is true that, in order to win humanity back to Himself, all God needs is love. He demonstrated such love when sending His son to die on the cross, even for the evil priests who nailed Him there. Where were we when Jesus took away sin? We did not exist. Thus, we could not have earned such a salvation had we tried. Organized religion advertises love, but cannot deliver it. They make up rules of engagement as they go. To them, love is but one ingredient of several ingredients necessary for salvation. It is certainly not the most important ingredient. It secures

nothing without many additional props. Here are some of the props promoted by religionists to keep one in good standing with the Creator of the Beatles—in no particular order:

- 1) love
- 2) regular church attendance
- 3) a humble attitude
- 4) guilt over sin
- 5) baptism
- 6) law-keeping
- 7) continual repentance
- 8) resistance to porn
- 9) prayer, prayer and more prayer
- 10) lots of crying

I do admire how God hopped, skipped and jumped over Christian creedalists to inject the most important truth into humanity via a rock and roll band from Liverpool, England.

BASIC INSTINCT

Watch a mother hold her baby. Watch a father play baseball with his son. Watch someone give money to a homeless person. Why do people do such things? They are unconsciously imitating God. Human beings did not invent love. God invented it and passed it down from His heart. Love did not evolve from sea slime. It did not fall from a tree. Before it became love, it never peeled a banana or scratched its ass. It *started* as love. It is so high that it is nearly crystalline. Again, the very fact that it exists is good news for us all. It is compelling evidence that *God* is love.

But what about the opposite of these things? Why do some mothers strangle their babies? Why do some fathers hit their sons with belts until the sons grow up to become alcoholics and belt their own children? Why do

some people rob homeless people, or kill them? Because there is another principle in the world called “evil.”

I told you in the last chapter that evil exists in order to backdrop good. Without evil (and its stepchild hate), good has no foil for display. It’s the contrast principle again. This is self-evident and indisputable. I need no Scripture verses to prove it. I have them and will eventually deploy them, but I refuse them for now. Human experience is the best teacher and nature itself takes the podium.

Think of television back in the days when there was nothing but black and white TV. Think about it: black *and* white. What if the picture were either all white or all black? There would *be* no picture. There is no such thing as knowledge without the necessary stupidity. Contrast is required for every single revelation known to humanity. Without contrast, there is no *Gilligan’s Island*.



The important question is: which is stronger, love or hate? Evil or good? We must answer this before moving on. I suspect that you already know the answer—deep down. I have this much confidence in human instinct. Why haven’t you killed yourself today? Because you’re basically an optimist. You basically believe that things will improve, or that enough good things will happen today to counteract losing your car keys. Enough good will probably happen today to keep you from sucking the end of a tailpipe. Give yourself credit. Here you are, a dying creature aging by the day, gradually descending toward the grave, and yet somehow you get up in the morning, wash your face and brush your teeth. What gets into you? You eat Raisin Bran. You think about putting gas in your car. You try to drink enough water so that your kidneys don’t dry up. You smoke cigarettes, yes, but you counteract that with asparagus and Brazil

nuts. Even when life kicks you in the nuts, you eventually find your feet again and scrape the poop off your shoe. You live to fight another day. Why?

God planted within you the instinct that He is love and that somehow life will “iron itself out.” A loved one dies, and you eventually shake it off. How the hell can you do this? Because God put a part of His light inside of you. (If *you* can go on, imagine how *He* can. The reason you’re basically an optimist is because all things *will* work out—beautifully—in the end. God planted this inside you

“Unless you are a part-time sinner, you cannot be a part-time saint. No one is ever fully sinner or fully saint in this life. Even Hitler loved his dog.”

because He knows that this “ironing out” thing is *exactly* what’s going to happen. You have the disposition because He has it. We are made in His image, all of us. Some more, some less. The same spirit that gives humanity breath dispenses to them this general disposition.)

This light exists irrespective of whether one acknowledge its presence or not. Then why do you sometimes yell at people and break things? Why do you curse at other drivers, calling them “idiots” and “morons” when you don’t really know them at all and are basing your opinion of them solely on the fact that they do not immediately move when a traffic light turns green? Does God get mad like this?

I have no evidence that God has ever smashed a coffee mug or given the finger to a daft motorist. But God needs opposing forces. Thus, God purposely created not only antagonistic human beings (the light within them is present, but buried) but antagonistic forces that operate inside our *own* being to temporarily temper “all things pure” with imperfection, that the “all things pure” might rise, shine, and eventually shout down (flip off) the gnarlier elements. Unless you are a part-time sinner, you cannot be a part-time saint. No one is ever fully sinner or fully saint in this life. Even Hitler loved his dog. Mother Theresa cussed. The saint eventually wins, but not without struggle. Everyone ends up sainted because this is what God wills. “All returns to God” (Romans 11:36). Not everyone returns in *this* life, but this life is not all there is. There are

two future eons ahead (Ephesians 2:7). Wait until you see what happens *then*.

THE NATURE OF EVIL

Love wins eventually because evil self-destructs. Some people say that the existence of evil proves that there is not a God. It's just the opposite. The existence of evil proves that there *is* a God because, without God holding it together, evil would self-destruct. Evil cannibalizes. Evil eats itself, whereas love grows and not only tolerates evil but swallows it and eventually transforms it. True love cannot be denied. Once it has served its purpose, evil can and will be denied. But love cannot be seen to win unless it has something to win against. There is no such thing as "winning" without an opposing force. The opposing force is called "evil." For now, God needs it. Thus, He provided for it.

It's not like God, wanting contrast, scrounged around for something that already existed (evil). No, God is not a guy in a junkyard looking for a fuel cap for his AMC Pacer. God invents everything; He doesn't scavenge other beings' inventions and co-opt them for His own purposes.

Evil came from God because all things came from God (Romans 11:36). I have always been this logical. At least no one can accuse me of hypocrisy, although they do try. That evil came from God does not mean that God is evil, as I will soon demonstrate. But here's a typical conversation started by people who assume I'm a hypocrite—

Accuser: You said that everything came out of God and you cite Romans 11:36.

Zender: That's true.

Accuser: Ha ha, then. We've got you. How do you explain evil?

Zender: Evil came out of God.

This shuts them up, but I have some 'splainin' to do. First of all, how could evil *not* have come from God? If it didn't, then Romans 11:36 would be a lie and not everything would have come out of God. Is God then evil? When I define evil for you, you will see that He is not. Is God a sinner? One must assume evil to be sin in order to level such as accusation. Evil is not sin. Evil is the opposite of "good," not "right." It's morally neutral.

"TO BREAK"

The Hebrew word for "evil" is *ra*. It simply means "to break." Evil is *destructive* rather than *constructive*. That's all there is to it. A building that is destroyed with explosives has an evil done to it. What differentiates a merely evil act from

one that is also a sin, is motive. Timothy McVeigh blew up the Alfred P. Murrah building in Oklahoma City and killed people. Destroying a building is perpetrating an evil upon it. On the other hand, I watched a city crew in St. Louis blow up a dilapidated warehouse, but they did it to make way for a new hospital. An identical evil was done to both buildings, by the same means. The difference was motive. In the former scenario, the motive was evil. In the latter, it was not. This is how God can do evil without sinning or without being evil Himself. God breaks things in order to re-make them better and stronger for having gone through the breaking.

God does evil, but He never sins. His motive is always right. It's always good; always. Everything subserves God's love, even evil. We know that evil subserves good, because there can be no such thing as good without it. Evil is necessary for the manifestation of good, just as hate for the manifestation of love. If evil and hate were eternal, then I would vote this God out of office. He wouldn't deserve the title. John Lennon would be better at the position than such a God and I would vote for Lennon to replace Him. But I know that hate and evil are temporary. I know this because "God is love" (1 John 4:8).

God is love and love is the best and better thing. It's the love and the good revealed by the hate and evil that will remain. If people died and stayed dead due



to hate and evil, then I'd vote this God out of office and replace Him with any one of the Beatles. But if He returns everyone and every thing to Himself eventually (through the cross of Christ), better and wiser for having experienced evil, and if it turns out that the only way God could have demonstrated salvation and love was through losing people first and hatching haters into the world—but then eventually changes and redeems the haters after they've done their dirty work—then I guess God would turn out to be a genius, retain His throne, and the Beatles could go back to producing rock and roll.

HOW TO SLEEP

Either God is in control of everything, or everything is random and nothing has reason. If you can manage that second option, good luck sleeping at night. I sometimes lose sleep over the first option, but at least it's sane. A couple shots of whiskey generally cure it. I can survive it. The latter? That everything is random chaos? No. No one even attempts to survive that. Christians who believe it (that evil acts are random because God can't do evil and so Satan must be in control of all evil and we know that Satan is a raging lunatic with a self-control problem and A.D.D.)—well, these Christians, in order to survive, have to not think about what they actually believe. Christianity is a religion of a bunch of people refusing to think about what they believe. Only thus can they sleep at night. If they ever chose to think—to really think—about what they believed, they would all jump off bridges. It's either that, or adopt the truth of Romans 11:36. Or actually believe that God is love (1 John 4:8), which I can never imagine any of them doing because true love would forgive even enemies, and Christians want no part of that. Their enemies must burn in hell. Either of these two options beats living in denial.

God is in control of the world (“all is through Him”). He created evil and temporarily employs it to display good (“all is out of Him”), and then He abolishes the evil after it has done its dirty work and returns everything to Himself (“All is into Him”). Everything I just said is encapsulated in Romans 11:36. Christians hate this verse because it destroys a half dozen of their most precious creeds, including eternal torment. Taking away eternal torment from a Christian is like taking away hairspray from Joel Osteen.

* * *



“Taking away eternal torment from a Christian is like taking away hairspray from Joel Osteen.”

“I like the way the kid hammers his enemies.”

“He’s not hammering his enemies, Harold. He’s accounting for evil. It has to be accounted for. This is the only guy I’ve ever heard who accounts for evil without making excuses for it or burying his head in the sand.”

“I’ve heard people say that this kid makes sense for a living.”

“I’ve heard him called ‘The World’s Most Outspoken Bible Scholar.’”

“He may be the world’s most *sensible* Bible scholar.”

“The way I see it, Harold, is that a person doesn’t have to like something for it to make sense. As far as evil goes, it all comes down to how things end.”

“The kid says that it ends like a gem. I like that. I never heard that in church. Christ, they used to tell me when I was a kid in summer Bible camp that not everything ended up back with God. Most things got screwed over by Satan.

God wanted a perfect universe, but He screwed Himself. His creation got away from Him and now the old man was running around the universe putting out fires. This is what they told me in summer Bible camp. Dumbshits.”

“That’s how it would be if God didn’t create evil. That would be the only alternative.”

“Good one, Maude. Either evil is accidental and random or God did it on purpose.”

“The funny thing is that the kid hasn’t given us a verse that directly says that God created evil. Even though there is one.”

“Hold on, Maude. Wait just a minute. You’re telling me that there *is* a verse that says God created evil? Now you *and* the kid are holding out on me?”

“It’s Isaiah 45:7. It’s as direct as can be. God says, ‘I create both evil and good; I, God, do all these things.’”

“Hell’s bells, that’s exhibit A. I wonder why the kid doesn’t use it.”

“He’s appealing to human experience. Human experience is undeniable. If he starts quoting a bunch of Scripture, people are going to think he’s some kind of Bible thumper.”

“Ha! *This* kid? Nah. He’s past that.”

“Harold. Something about the way you defend the kid is getting to me. Something about the flowering of your intellect gets to me. What’s happening?”

“I don’t know, Maude. Who ever thought that the truth about evil could work like oysters?”

* * *

“HOLY CONTRAST, BATMAN”

The author of a thriller writes exciting books for potential readers/fans who exchange their money for an ultimately redeeming drama. In the thriller, every character is of Boy Scout quality, helping quintessentially old women across streets. Nothing bad ever happens in such books. Not one off-colored word ever flies off a nicotine-stained lip. No one breaks traffic laws. Hell, at green lights every single driver is so alert, and *not* texting, that they move immediately through the intersection for the sake of the drivers behind them. In the classic thriller novel, life is respected. Murder is unthought-of and no lover ever leaves another for the sake of another lover. Everyone turns in their guns and settles disputes with tipped beer mugs and handshakes.

This is obviously untrue. No one would buy or read any story devoid of contrast. There must be villains against which protagonists wrestle and eventually shine. A hero can be a hero only if a villain exists.

The writers of the 1966 *Batman* television series knew this well. Who wants to watch Batman joining the police department and becoming a desk clerk to Commissioner Gordon and Chief O’Hara? No one wants Batman filing invoices. We want to see him fighting the Joker; the Riddler; the Penguin; Catwoman. We need these rogues and so does Batman. So does God. To assure that He has them, God creates them. “All is out of God”



(Romans 11:36). God can’t just count on there being evil people in the world. He can’t simply hope that enough of them exist and then tie His plans to their backs in hopes of taking advantage of situations or people created by someone else.

ACT 3

I said that love conquers hate and good conquers evil. It does. You, the reader, instinctively know this. You take your cue from Hollywood scriptwriters. Or should I say: Hollywood scriptwriters take their cue from you. What you demand, they provide. You demand redemption. You insist upon happy endings. They provide them.

Every Hollywood scriptwriter understands and feeds this need. If the ending to a film is not exactly happy, then it better satisfy *somehow*. No writer can end a film with a discordant note and get away with it. (Musicians certainly cannot.) However a film ends, it better allow for soft piano music at the end, accompanying mature contemplation. This goes for novels and stage plays as well. Even a tragedy must somehow reflect the best in

us. Some facet of human nobility must, in the end, move the audience to tears. Or cheers. High emotion championing resolve, love, duty, pride—the end of a production better improve upon the beginning.

Divinely-inspired instinct coursing through the arteries of composers, writers and directors ensure that this happens. Movies, novels or stage plays without satisfying conclusions simply don't sell. Shakespeare knew it; Spielberg knows it; George Lucas knows it; even Stephen King figured it out early. Where did this come from? Why is it innate to our genus and species?

It's a God-implanted sense. This is what curtails suicide. Yes, some people do implode, but it's probably partially (or completely, though indirectly) due to the hopelessness of the Christian creeds, imparted during childhood. Parents drag their kids to church and force them to listen to why they have to behave themselves to avoid God torturing them for eternity. The kids are forced to listen to why most of the world will end in chaos and why God—in spite of His best intentions—can't stop evil. These parents might as well hand their kids crack pipes and meth rocks.



Back to the moviemakers. I think that films and much of popular music actually saves kids from the despair they grew up with in church. The hearts of artists (not all of them, but many)—however pagan or overtly devoid of religious trappings—beat closer to the heart of God than pulpit-bound pastors trained in the “turn or burn” mentality and the presentation of “God” as a celestial Santa Claus ready to drop coal upon the heads of misbehaving children.

THE WHINEY JACKASS SAVES US

I love Woody Allen, but he's a stubborn jackass when it comes to God. But it doesn't really matter. God seeps into everything Woody Allen writes and directs. God does this without Woody's acquiescence. Whether he realizes it or not (he doesn't), Woody Allen is made in the image of God, yes, even in the midst of his most vociferous denials. Any Woody Allen film—*Annie Hall*, *Interiors*, *Small-time Crooks*, *Match Point*—bears God's fingerprints. Love wins. Devotion wins. Jerks learn through trial and gently reform. There is death along the way, yes, but humanity rises to meet its Maker. The spirit knows. None of it is accidental.



MAGIC GOD FORMULA

The three-act play is no coincidence. Every movie, play, screenplay or novel has three acts. The writers have probably never heard of Romans 11:36, but they live by its truth. If you are not aware of the three-act structure, once I have explained it you will see it everywhere.

Act 1: Introduce your characters. Act 2: Get your characters up a tree and throw rocks at them. Act 3: Rescue and redeem your characters. It's straight out of God's mind. None of it requires a conscious participation. It simply *is*, and not even atheists can escape it.

Act 1 is self-evident. Act 2 puts you on the edge of your seat and threatens the ends of your fingernails. It's when everything goes to smash. It's the part where you can't take your eyes from the screen or page. It's when you wonder how the trouble could possibly be resolved. The author or screenwriter has successfully put his or her characters up that tree from which no escape seems possible. This is how the artist gets money from you. You want this to happen. You expect it, and the artist consistently delivers it. No one failing to do it succeeds in either Hollywood or New York publishing.

Act 3 ensues, and this without fail. It must. You need a payoff for the angst of Act 2. Bad guys go down for the count; heroes claim victory. Catwoman falls to her death in a bottomless pit, clutching a sack of gems that she cannot let go of for greed. (At least she has nine lives.) Some villains die, yes. Others reform. Most likely, the pro-

tagonist enters stage left a loser and departs stage right an improved specimen via the struggle against evil. Viewers either cry or heave sighs of relief.

CRAP SHOOT?

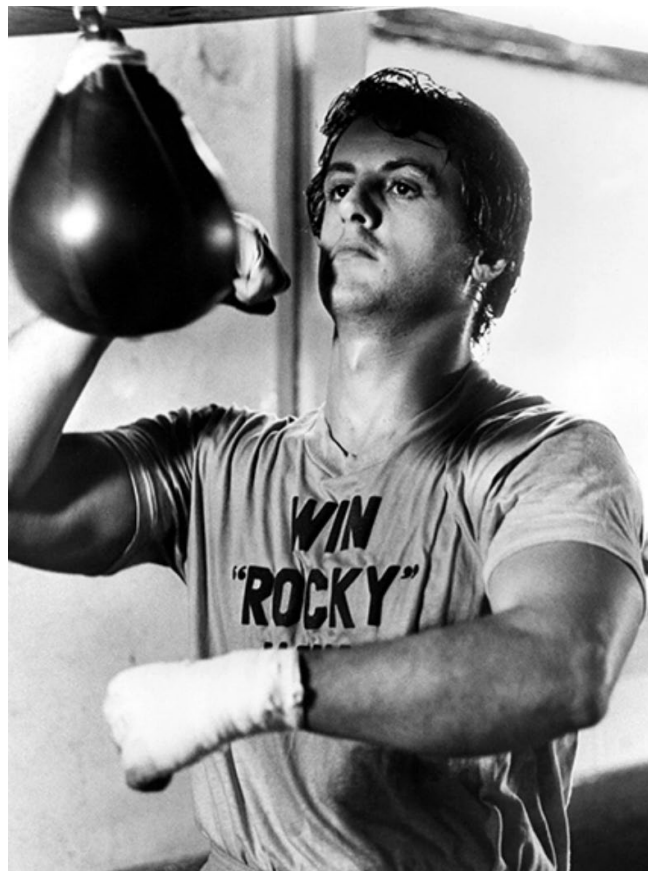
What if evil reigned? What if evil were eternal rather than eonian? What if evil were God's default setting? What if there were no guarantee that everything will turn out right? What if the movie you bought a ticket to turned into a series of random scenes? What if not even the writer or director knew how it would end? We can't even imagine such a thing. Every novel, play, film or television series would be a crap shoot. Who wants to watch continuing scenes of aimless chaos?

The viewing and reading public demands that novels, films and plays be a microcosm of real life. But wait. I thought that real life sucked. I thought that real life was unbearable. It's not—and this is reflected in popular novels, plays and movies. These are real-life situations, compacted. Whereas life is a potentially 80-year slog through the three acts, the movie compacts the slog to ninety minutes of pith. It is real-life on steroids. It is real-life with a match lit under it. But it is life nevertheless, and we relate to it.

You say, "But real life does not always end satisfactorily." "Life isn't a movie," you say. That's true. But you assume that we're currently experiencing Act 3. Not necessarily. All of life is Act 1 and 2—with a *promise* of an Act 3. Act 3 is the resolution.

"ADRIAN!"

You can't leave *Rocky* during Act 2. You could, but I don't recommend it. If you do, you will go the rest of your life thinking that Rocky Balboa is a bum from Philadelphia who stays a bum. It's tempting to leave the theater or close the novel after Act 2. This is how painful Act 2 can be. In life, some people close the book and leave the theater, yes. We call it suicide. I don't blame people for killing themselves. But they are leaving *Rocky* in Act 2. Real life may very well be a continuing series of Act 2 calamities, but most people survive it because of an instinct that there *is* an Act 3, even though it is not presently evident. This is the thing I referenced earlier, commonly referred to as "optimism." You'll never hear about it in church unless you've sold your soul to the cult and can somehow convince yourself that the doom and gloom promoted there (for those not in the club) is the



best that God can do.

No one wants to read ahead of time to the end of a novel because people crave suspense. When you're heading out to see a new film, you plug your ears when anyone who has seen it talks about it. Film critics announce "spoiler alerts" for this very reason. People love suspense. *But for ninety minutes only.* In real life, who wants suspense? We *want* spoiler alerts as we endure our many tomorrows. Who wants to *not* know how all of this will end? Who wants to think of life as a random series of images and experiences for which there is neither rhyme nor reason? The good news is that God tells us ahead of time how this "movie" ends. In a nutshell, it's the final third of Romans 11:36.

MURPHY GOES WRONG

I am very well aware of Murphy's Law, which says that "anything that can go wrong will go wrong." I have quoted it myself on Murphy-type days. Murphy's Law is pessimistic hogwash. We all know that Murphy's Law isn't true. If everything went wrong that could go wrong, the world would have exploded on day two. You would have been dead out of the birth canal. Your mother would

have been dead out of the birth canal. When God created Adam, Adam would have gotten tangled up in the soil or eaten by an alligator. Were Murphy's law true, no ball would ever have started rolling and stayed rolling. Murphy's Law is fiction. I'd like to get hold of this Murphy guy, even though—as I have said—I've cited the idiot's principle many times myself in the darkest of times.

EXHIBIT A

If people thought that God was inherently evil, then none of us would be here. We'd all have killed ourselves by now. I, personally, would have walked out into the ocean with an anvil around my neck. There is an inherent human suspicion, however, that God is love. That God is good. Even Woody Allen believes this—in spite of being one of the whiniest people on the planet. He can't help himself, Woody. He puts love and redemption in all of his films. I can't get away from this example. Woody is Exhibit A of the principle that even people who whine and bitch continually on the outside know the truth inside. Get them away from

“Were Murphy's Law true, Adam would have gotten tangled up in the soil or eaten by an alligator.”

the sad, brightly-lit details of life, put them in a room by themselves, draw the curtain, place their fingers on an early fifties manual Olympia SM-3 typewriter and, in spite of themselves, they will play God.

THE SCREENPLAY OF SCREENPLAYS

If God were evil, we'd all be screwed. If God were evil, then not even writers and directors could cajole redemption onto the stage of their screens or pages. Their productions would die of loneliness. These productions, again, are a microcosm of what God does. They are a microcosm of how things started, how they go, and how they will end.

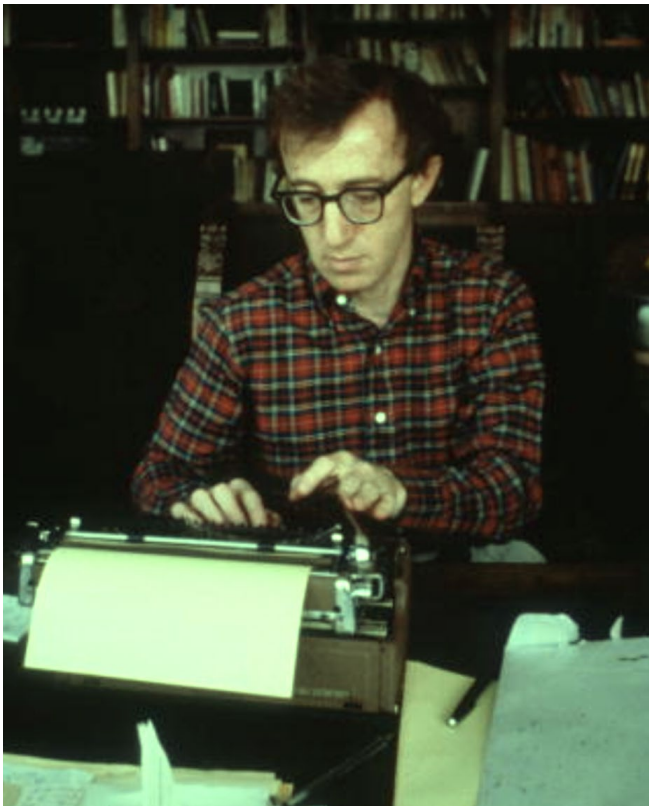
It's Romans 11:36.

“All is out of God, through God, and into God.” There is the three-act play, movie and novel, right there. Spielberg didn't invent it. Shakespeare didn't invent it. Woody Allen didn't invent it. George Lucas didn't invent it.

The apostle Paul outlined it in Romans 11:36, 2,000 years ago. But not even Paul invented it. He merely recorded it. God invented it. The inventor of Romans 11:36 1) creates things, 2) purposely screws them up, and 3) redeems the things created by virtue of the lessons learned during the “screw-up.”

THE DERANGED MONSTER

But back to literary and cinematic antagonists, without whom there is no watchable production. Are they damned to hell for eternity? Popular religion would have it so. But popular religion lies. Popular religion is evil of itself, all the while pretending to be good. I said at the outset that John Lennon is smarter than popular religionists. “All you need is love,” he wrote and sang. Yes. Popular religion, with its dozens of non-essential contributions to God's work, denies this truth. It's the same with the three-act play. The world gets it right. Spielberg is smarter than Christianity; Woody Allen is smarter than Christianity; George Lucas is smarter than Christianity. I'm not dissing Christ, I'm dissing the fan club that claims His name. Jesus Christ Himself is not a Christian. Christianity has become the world's most popular religion. Hm, I wonder how that happened. It's a club, not a truth. It's a cult of humans assuming divine accomplishment. It's a social gathering of self-righteous nincompoops where the random chaos of a foundering “God” never quite coalesces. The end of the Christian story





sucks. The Christian God is a deranged monster. He is codependent. He loves you as long as you love Him. He saves you “by grace” as long as you do everything right. There is one thing God isn’t, and that’s a hypocrite. Let God be true, though every man a liar. You will find more truth watching *Rocky* and listening to the Beatles than you will on any given Sunday in the steeple-topped emporiums of hypocrisy known as churches.

God eventually takes care of even His antagonists, or else He is not love. Did He not cast these antagonists Himself? Did He not write and direct the script and cast whomever He chose as the bad guys? Is it really the fault of the antagonists that they were thrust into roles against their wills—roles that opposed all that is good and decent?

“BECAUSE OF THE WONDERFUL THINGS HE DOES”

L. Frank Baum wrote *The Wizard of Oz* in 1900, and then thirty-nine years later director Victor Fleming put it to film. Seventy-seven years down *that* yellow brick road, audiences continue to immerse themselves in the drama between evil and good, hate and love, sin and salvation, death and life. Thus engaged, they gladly choose to forget that the film is the result of a screenplay written by Noel Langley, Florence Ryerson, and Edgar Allan Woolf. They put from their minds that the fantastic Oz was in

fact a collection of sets at MGM studios on 10202 W. Washington Blvd. in Culver City, California. They don’t want to know that Margaret Hamilton, the Cleveland-born actress who portrayed the Wicked Witch of the West in the film, was in need of money at the time and took the role to help support her son. It’s an unwanted consideration, while watching the film, to think that the same person commanding flying monkeys and hurling fireballs at the scarecrow drove to work each morning at 4 a.m. with a cup of coffee in hand, fighting traffic on La Cienega Boulevard. Viewers of the film gladly suspend their knowledge of a real, behind-the-scenes world in order to steep themselves in the Merry Old Land of Oz.

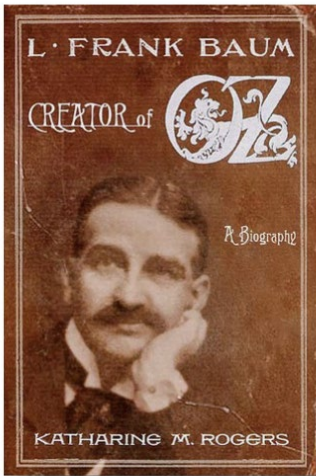
Consider yourself to be living in God’s version of this classic film. Some of the players in this production that we call life realize that we walk, talk and struggle our way through a pre-written, pre-planned production. Others have yet to be apprised of that. Looking back at some important Biblical history, some understand the



Pharaoh of the Exodus to have been a pre-scripted, temporary antagonist to the hero (Moses), who will one day be relieved of his difficult role. (I am among these.) Others imagine that Pharaoh cast *himself* as a hard-hearted ruler and that God merely co-opted him for His purposes, and then, when He's finished with him, will torture him for eternity. How lovely. Still considering now the broad scope of earthly existence, some folks actually believe that this account of Moses and Pharaoh and this life itself is a mindless, unscripted foray into speculation and chance wherein even the director (God) chews His nails in dread apprehension of what may occur next. And then, when things don't go His way, He simply throws up His hands in exasperation and tortures everyone.

A WRITER IS A WRITER

Who attacks L. Frank Baum for writing both protagonists and antagonists into his book? No one blames Baum for destroying the very evil character (the witch)



that was born from his own pen. We thank him for it. We thank him both for the creation of the memorable though villainous character, and for her vanquishing. Were Baum to have brought her back to life and healed her (as God will do with His temporary enemies), we'd have thanked him for that as well. But God? We curse him for the same thing for which we laud

Baum. God is attacked for writing and directing a production that makes *The Wizard of Oz* look like poor neighborhood theater. Not one actor in *The Wizard of Oz* said to Victor Fleming on the set in Culver City, "Why have you made me this way?" They knew going in what Fleming and the writers were asking of them. Having read the script, they could have rejected their parts. None of them did. Players on the great stage of *this* life, of course, are not so advantaged. We haven't the luxury of either accepting or rejecting a script. We only find out later (well, some of us do) that there even *is* a script. Those still in the dark on this count con-

tinue believing that they have crafted and are directing themselves in an unscripted plot that is unfolding—absolutely—in real-time, to the suspense of all.

"MY PRETTY"

Margaret Hamilton, script in hand, rightly feared what the role of the hard-hearted witch would do to her. From Wikipedia:

When asked about her experiences on the set of *The Wizard of Oz*, Hamilton said that her biggest fear was that her monstrous film role would give children the wrong idea of who she really was. In reality, she cared deeply about children, frequently giving to charitable organizations. She often remarked about children coming up to her and asking her why she had been so mean to poor Dorothy. She appeared on an episode of Mister Rogers' Neighborhood in 1975, where she explained to children that she was only playing a role, and showed how putting on a costume "transformed" her into the witch. She also made personal appearances, and Hamilton described the children's usual reaction to her portrayal of the Witch:

"Almost always they want me to laugh like the Witch. And sometimes when I go to schools, if we're in an auditorium, I'll do it. And there's always a funny reaction, like 'Ye gods, they wish they hadn't asked.' They're scared. They're really scared for a second. Even adolescents. I guess for a minute they get the feeling they got when they watched the picture. They like to hear it but they don't like to 'hear' it. And then they go, 'Ohhhhhhhhhhh...!' The picture made a terrible impression of some kind on them, sometimes a ghastly impression, but most of them got over it, I guess... because when I talk like the Witch, and when I laugh, there is a hesitation and then they clap."

Margaret Hamilton played the Wicked Witch of the West so well that, for years, children feared her. She labored to convince them of her true self, then struck upon an idea. As Margaret Hamilton, she would laugh as the witch, causing the children to associate the nice lady before them with the movie character. It was initially a strain on the movie-conditioned brains of the children, but they eventually appreciated the difference between temporary evil and permanent good. The role of the witch was temporary. Margaret Hamilton was the permanent good.

God's enemies in this life are as real as can be; it is the *roles* that are temporary. The eventual deliverance of the characters from these roles, however, will be no less real



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than the roles themselves. Few people ask the ever-important question, “What happens when the movie is over?”

SWEET REMINISCE

Ray Bolger played the scarecrow in *The Wizard of Oz*. Everyone loves the kindly man of straw in search of a brain. For the rest of his life, fans of the film flocked to Ray. In his case, the sweet-hearted scarecrow reflected Ray’s real-life disposition. (Yet even this was a God-given role; a gift.) Unlike Hamilton’s experience, children gazed lovingly upon him.

After the making of *The Wizard of Oz*, Hamilton and Bolger remained friends for life. I like to imagine them sitting together years later at Ray’s house, discussing their roles in *The Wizard of Oz*. Back in the day they were arch enemies. Now, here they sat as the dearest of friends.

I like to think of Moses and Pharaoh in the same way, sitting together and reminiscing on a far-future occasion. I can almost hear Pharaoh saying, “My biggest fear, Moses, was that my monstrous role would give people the wrong idea about who I really was, that they would forget that I was a creature once pure from the hand of God, Whose very hand twisted me to suit His chosen role for me.” Moses—the Ray Bolger of Exodus—would surely thank God for the gift of never having to battle such an awful

stereotype. This knowledge would lend Moses a heartfelt sympathy, I think, for his former “on-screen” nemesis.

“ALL IN ALL”

I do like to picture—and I believe I will one day see—these former combatants relaxing in the “all in all” that they will one day become in God (1 Corinthians 15:28). Then, in the light of God’s glory and grace, they will reminisce over “the old days” of necessary contrast, when God required the battling of contrary characters. Each man will then bask and abound in full acceptance of his role, understanding that at no time during the Great Production was the script or the direction ever in their hands. All will be known then; all will be understood. The applause of an appreciative audience will drown out all painful memories. In the glow of God’s light, all will appreciate—players and viewers alike—the time when men and women played such disparate yet necessary roles in the Classic of All Time.

Of the increase of this drama—that is, of the good that shall come to all because of this life—there shall be no consummation. For the good shall endure long after this production has slammed shut, forever, its studio doors. —MZ